AUGUST - 1977

IN UNITY

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GENERAL CONFERENCE VIII

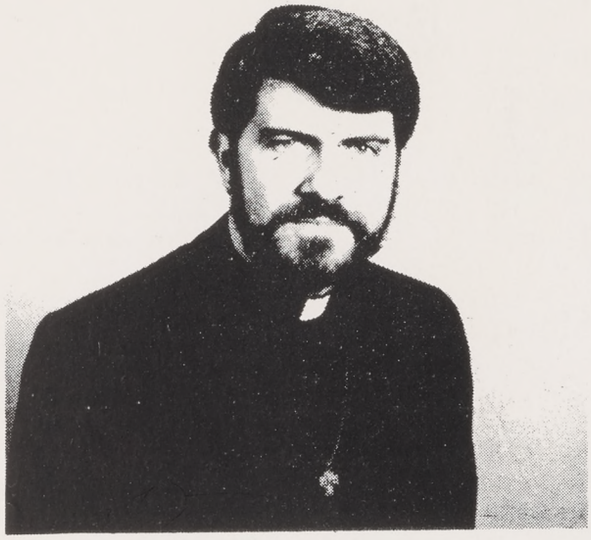
DENVER, COLORADO — AUGUST 1 — 7, 1977

Rejoice in the Lord, always, again I say, Rejoice! Let all people know your forebearance. The Lord is at hand . . . . Finally, my Brothers and Sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise . . .

Think On These Things.

Phillippians 4:4-8

THE NEWS AND OPINION JOURNAL OF THE
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES



"Think on these things..."

by Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry

Welcome to the 8th General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches!

I know that if each of us will yield ourselves to the moving of the Holy Spirit, this will become the greatest spiritual feast in our denomination's history. I'm happy, with the rest of the Board of Elders, to announce that this is the largest attended Conference we have had.

Our Committee, Commission and Board gatherings will be informative and educational, the Business Meetings spiritual, and our worship services inspiring. Again, if we yield ourselves in prayer and thanksgiving to the Lord, we will all leave this Conference happy in knowing we all did our best.

The theme of General Conference this year is found in the New Testament Book of Philippians, Chapter 4, Verse 8.

"Finally, believers, whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any *virtue*, and i *report*; if there be any *virtue*, and if there be any *praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS.*"

During this Conference I hope each of us who make up the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches will take the time to meditate on Truth, Honesty, Justice, Purity, Charity, and Community. *Think on These Things.*

I believe that we must prepare ourselves for the period in which we have just now started entering, the time when many of us will be called upon to make sacrifices for the Revelation on which this Fellowship is founded, that is "God loves *all* people." Many in the UFMCC will be persecuted because that revelation from God sounds too radical for so many so-called "Christians."

When God gave me this revelation, the Lord directed me to preach from the pulpit of MCC a three-pronged gospel. The gospel of salvation, Christian Social Action, and Community. The Lord let me know that the gospel was made up of all three of those ideas, not either/or.

Jesus, the Christ, came to earth and died for the sins of *all* people, not just some. "Come unto me, *all* you who labor, and I *will* give you rest," Jesus said. The UFMCC By Laws state, "Every person is justified by Grace to God through faith in Jesus Christ." Yes, you can be a Christian and a gay or non-gay person.

Jesus also concerned himself with the suffering, both physical and mental, of humankind. In his first sermon he read this scripture, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; God has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverence to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Jesus, by his example, let those who would follow him know that we were never to rest until we changed the world. We would have to end oppression by standing and exposing ignorance for what it is, by making up our minds that we will not live in fear. Only then will deliverance be ours. That's Christian Social Action!

Jesus taught us about community (or caring) when he said "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no person than this, that you are willing to lay down your life for a friend." We in the Metropolitan Community Churches must make up our minds that we are going to create a community of believers who care so much for each other,that the world will think twice before they try to do any of us any harm. An army of lovers will never be defeated!

In the coming days, we who are a part of the UFMCC can be assured that, with the vote in Dade County, Florida, and the hate it has unleashed against gay people and our supporters, our churches will become special targets for our enemies.

We *are* going to go through a period of persecution. As God prepares us for the battle to come, God is cleansing the Church. We *are* going to lose both ministers and members from our Churches. Some will leave because they are afraid of the coming storm. Others because they are weak in the faith. Still others because they have never truly understood the vision this Church is built on, and others because they have lost the vision given. All of this the Lord has shown me.

If we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, if we humble ourselves before God our Creator, if we look to Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith; then one day, we will stand before the throne. of God as the Lord's purified people who were tested and found worthy.

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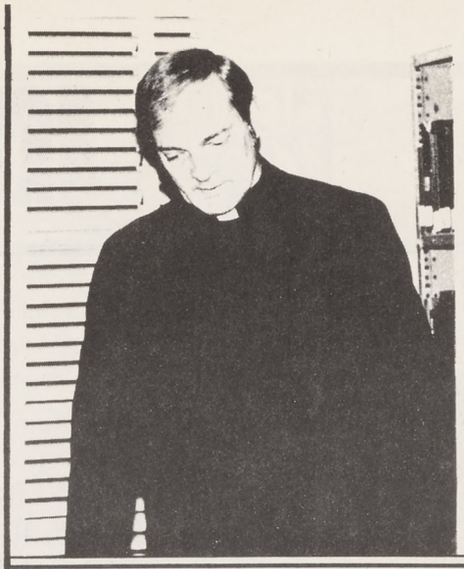

INSIDE IN UNITY

Editorial comment by Richard R. Mickley

AND SO WHAT'S PERVERSION?

Because a lot has been ballyhooed around about perversion, I'd like to get around to saying a few things about it myself. But I'm going to get around to it in my own way.

Why does IN UNITY-THE GAY CHRISTIAN devote a disproportionate number of its pages to issues related to gay Christians? Why does the Universal Fellowship Press publish a disproportionate number of books, pamphlets, and tracts dealing with Christian sexuality and homosexuality?

An answer is deserved. First, let me state that I unequivocably believe that the Christian life *must* be a balanced life or it is no Christian life at all. I devote a considerable amount of my free time to directing a movement of Christian renewal, The Exercise in Christian Community Living, which emphasizes the balance of prayer, mediation, and witnessing that is absolutely necessary for stable Christian life. I have preached five weekend long retreats in the last year in connection with this movememnt – and sexuality is not even mentioned on the weekend.

Then why the emphasis in IN UNITY and Universal Fellowship Publications? My answer comes in a number of points which may not form a syllogism, but add up to a lot of good reasons for the emphasis we have focused on recently.

1) I have a file drawer full of the catalogs of good religious book publishers from New York to San Francisco. They publish thousands and thousands of good books on Prayer, the Scriptures, on The Involvement of the Christian in the Mission of the Church.

2) Among these thousands and thousands, there are only a rare few (three of which are written by Dr. Norman Pittenger) which deal with Christian sexuality in a positive way – especially for homosexual Christians.

3) The Universal Fellowship is extremely limited in capital, so it must examine the market to determine the need best served by its limited resources.

4) MCC Churches and members of the community at large can find all the books they want to fill almost every need on almost every subject – except those which present homosexuality in a way which conscientious, committed, Bible-believing, gay Christians can accept. And we believe that when the community wants and needs books and materials to meet these needs they legitimately turn to the Universal Fellowship Press and Dignity, for example, and that we *legitimately* (emphatically) must try to fill that need.

5) We believe the MCC Churches, the people of God who have come to know God's love and mercy through the prophetic ministry of this church and its founder, do indeed turn to IN UNITY-THE GAY CHRISTIAN and to the Universal Fellowship Press for some of the answers or at least for some of the resources they want and need as they face the rising tide of homophobic people and join the counter rising tide of people concerned for the human rights of all, incluing their own, whether they are gay or not so gay.

6) If the pen is mightier than the sword, and if there is a mighty battle brewing against the ungodly use of God's hold Word in vain, then it behooves those whose pen is guided by the Spirit of God (did I say inspired?) to use it to lead the people of God, not only in the defense,

Please turn to page 43

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IN UNITY

VOL. VII / NUM. 3 AUGUST / 1977

The Gay Christian was published in Volumn VII, Number 1, and will be published again in the next issue of IN UNITY.

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ANNOUNCING:

A NEW BOOK BY NORMAN PITTENGER!

Dr. Pittenger, the author of over 60 books, world famous theologian, seminary professor for nearly half a century, needs no introduction.

But THIS is to introduce his newest book:

Gay Lifestyles.
A Christian Interpretation of Homosexuality and the Homosexual

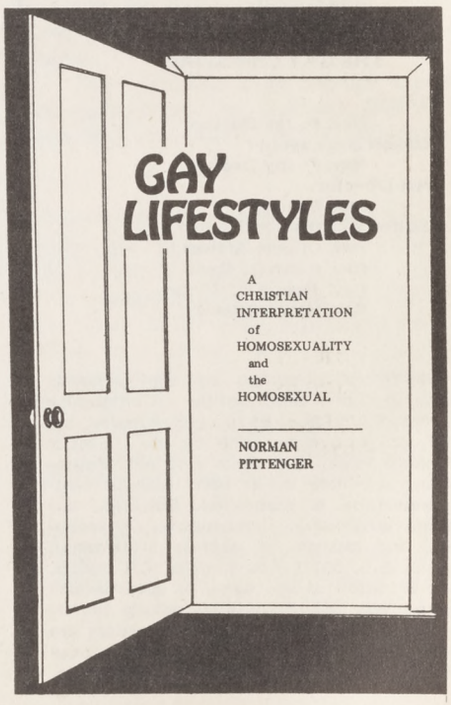
This book will be published by the Universal Fellowship Press on August 1, 1977

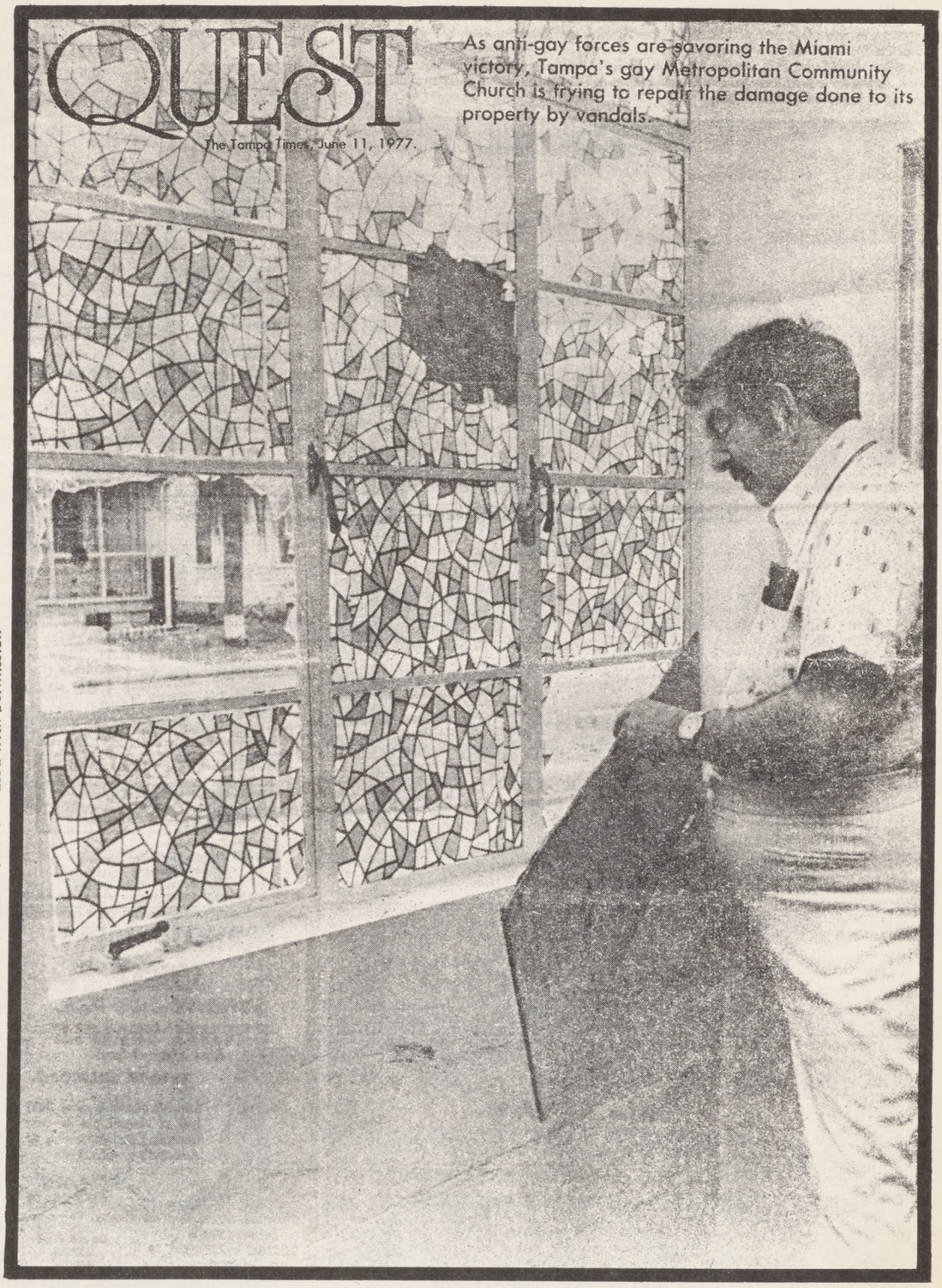
Dr. Pittenger deals with the following topics in his new book:

1) "Who are homosexuals?"
2) "The meaning of being human"
3) "The homosexual lifestyle"
4) "Homosexual relationships"
5) "Society's attitudes"
*6) "Homosexuals and the Bible"
7) "On coming out"
8) "Homosexual unions and fidelity"
9) "A Christian interpretation of homosexuality"

* *This chapter is NOW available as a pamphlet.*

The pamphlet "Homosexuals and the Bible" may be ordered in quantity (five or more) for $.50 each. Please note that bookstore, resale, or quantity orders qualify for trade discount on all Universal Fellowship Press books.





Photograph courtesy of The Tampa Times, June 11, 1977 — used with permission

AN OPEN LETTER TO ANITA BRYANT–GREEN

by THE REV. ELDER JOHN H. HOSE

AN OPEN LETTER TO ANITA BRYANT GREEN, presented as the sermon in the services of Metropolitan Community Church of Tampa, Florida on Sunday evening, June 5, 1977.

"LOVEST THOU ME?"

Dear Ms. Bryant:

For reasons known only to yourself, you have set up to castigate a segment of society, who — according to you — are to be condemned and damned because the Bible tells YOU so!

In a form letter which you sent to thousands of persons who apparently believe as you do, you made several interesting statements:

> "I was so pleased to hear from you — and learn that you support my fight against special privileges for openly practicing homosexuals."
>
> "Think about it! If the homosexuals have their way, my four children and your children and grandchildren will be subjected to godless deviate homosexual pressure right in the schoolroom."
>
> "I urgently need you to join with me and my family in a national crusade against this attack on GOD and His Laws."
>
> "Please understand, I don't hate homosexuals, I love them; but I love them enough to tell them the Truth about God's Word. I want to help them find the love of Jesus and return to God's Moral Laws. (I Corinthians, 6:9, 10, 11).
>
> "P. S. I have just received frightening news — The Gay Liberation group is raising money to unleash a major publicity campaign — pushing for special privileges for openly practicing homosexuals — We must stop them! — and protect our children. Please help — I'm enclosing a reply envelope.. God bless You." — Anita
> ("But it was very good of you to help me in my troubles." Phil. 4:13)

I wish to respond to you, Ms. Bryant, by asking you to look further into those Scriptures you so blandly quote — and I also want to respond to your anxieties, paranoia, homophobia and fears — one by one!

Special Privileges

Several times in your fund-raising letter, you mention that homosexuals seek SPECIAL PRIVILEGES (emphasis mine). You are correct, Ms. Bryant, if you feel that black people sought special privileges when they sought the right to be free . . . when Jews sought to worship as they please, and sought not to be excluded from living and working in restricted communities . . . Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and any and all who dare to be different, who do indeed assert the right to interpret the Scriptures according to their own lights.

There is nothing SPECIAL about the guaranteed Constitutional right to be "free and equal" in this country — to be able to "pursue life, liberty and happiness." The statute against which you rebel in Dade County, Florida, Ms. Bryant, is but a redundant statement of guarantees contained in the Bill of Rights of the U. S. Constitution. All the new ordinance was intended to was bring about ENFORCEMENT of those constitutional rights — to discriminate against no one for any reason!

Do you consider it "special privilege" that you can stand in public, with your *special* access to the media, and present your views in the light of what the writer of Corinthians (whom you so blithely quote "out of context") says in I. Tim. 2:9-12:

> "I also want women to be modest and sensible about their clothes and to dress properly; not with fancy hair styles, or with gold ornaments or pearls or expensive dresses, but with good deeds, as is proper for women *who claim to be religious*. Women should learn in silence and humility. I do not allow women to teach or to have authority over men; *they must keep quiet*." (Good News for Modern Man)

I don't agree with that scripture either, Ms. Bryant, as obviously you don't! I only mention it to show you how ridiculous scripture quoting can become, and to assure you that although — in the light of the foregoing — it would appear that *you* SEEK special privilege, we do not. HOMOSEXUALS AREN'T INTERESTED IN SPECIAL PRIVILEGES UNDER THE LAW — just the LAW-GIVEN RIGHT to be treated with equality!

Recruiting

Now — to your second point. For years now, most authorities agree that approximately 1 out of 10 persons is indeed homosexually oriented, which includes all jobs and professions, school teachers, lawyers, doctors, etc. Even back in the 1920's when I was going to grade school and high school, there were homosexual teachers. The kids knew it, and I don't presume we were any smarter than our parents. Wanta know something, Ms. Bryant? They NEVER RECRUITED ANYONE! But I did have a female heterosexual typing teacher who did her best to recruit me and other young male students for immoral purposes. Furthermore — as the saying goes — you can't rape the willing — it is also *ipso facto* not possible to recruit the UNWILLING! If your child gets recruited, Ms. Bryant, it is because he or she has within him or herself the capabilities of sexual feelings for either gender, and *something* in their nature and conditioning led them to want this experience.

You are right about homosexuals not being able to reproduce themselves - up to a point. But you must know that we are all products of a heterosexual mating, we have all beeen reared in "families" composed of male and female, and were NOT recruited! We ARE!!

If You Love Me . . . .

Primarily, it is not my purpose to engage in a name-calling, proof-texting exchange with you, Ms. Bryant, but rather to do my best to help you expand your un-

derstanding, especially in view of your claim that you are a "born-again Christian.." We hope to help you and others of like mind to understand the meaning of Christ's question when he asked Simon Peter: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" (John 21:15-17) To which question, Peter responded: "Lord, you know that I love you." Even as you appear to do when you state: "I don't hate homosexuals, I love them; but I love them enough to tell them about God's word."

Oh, Ms. Bryant, does not the Gospel tell us that Jesus Christ IS God's Word? Did not the same Jesus tell Peter: "If you love me, feed my sheep?" What was he really saying, Ms. Bryant?

Wasn't he really saying — don't tell me that you love me — show me! I admonish you to stop beating your gums about how much you love me, Anita, while you try to deprive me of MY right to LOVE, LIVE, WORK, CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY WITHOUT HARASSMENT.

Hear the Words of Jesus

Ms. Bryant — you who are so hooked on the Bible — why don't you read it? In light of the hypocrisy you manifest, in telling us how much you love us out of one side of your mouth while you stir up bombings, burnings, hatred, bigotry, and smashed church windows to demonstrate the fear and hatred which you bear to others who are also God's children. I invite you to come to Tampa to see the vandalism to this house of God — where according to you, those godless homosexuals gather weekly — to seek the Way, the Truth, the Life! I admonish you to hear these words of JESUS — not St. Paul, nor your minister, but JESUS:

> "Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples. 'The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees,' he said, ' are the authorized interpreters of Moses' Law. So you must obey and follow everything they tell you to do; do not, however, imitate their actions, because they do not practice what they preach.' " (Mat. 23:1-3)

Do you practice what you preach, Miss Bryant?

> " 'They do everything just so people will see them. See how big the containers are with scripture verses on their foreheads and arms, and notice how long are the hems of their cloaks! They love the best places at feasts and the reserved seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the market places and have people call them *Teacher*. You must not be called *Teacher*, for you are all brothers (and sisters) of one another and have only one Teacher." (Mat. 23:5-8)

Do you do *everything* so people will *see* you? Isn't that the sum of YOUR life-style — to be seen and be paid for it? (People like you and Richard Nixon.)

Do you presume to be called TEACHER to direct others in how they should think, act, what do you DO with THAT Scripture, Anita? Or is it one of those you conveniently apply to others?

> "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven in men's faces, but you yourselves will not go in, and neither will you let people in who are trying to go in!" (Mat. 23:13)

Do you lock the door to *your* kingdom, Ms. Bryant — do you, along with others who profess to teach the Word of God simply say: "Get you hence, homos, there is NO ROOM for you here?" Do you NOT defy the VERY teachings of Jesus Christ in this manner?

> "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You sail the seas and cross whole countries to win one convert; and when you succeed, you make him twice as deserving of going to hell as you yourselves are!" (Mat. 23:15)

Are not your efforts directed toward making people over in YOUR image, and then destroying WHO THEY REALLY ARE in the process? Are you thus making them twice as deserving of "going to hell"?

> "How terrible for you, blind guides! You teach, 'If a man swears by the Temple he isn't bound by his vow; but if he swears by the gold in the Temple, he is bound.' Blind fools! Which is more important, the gold or the Temple which makes the gold holy?"

Do you swear by the GOLD, Ms. Bryant, rather than the temple? You say your career is threatened because you stand for your principles (read temples). Isn't it the GOLD you're really concerned about, and not the principles?

> "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You give to God one tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill and cumin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty. These you should practice, without neglecting the others. Blind guides! You strain a fly out of your drink, but swallow a camel!" (Mat. 23: 23-24)

Are you *really* concerned with the Law and moral standards, Ms. Bryant? What are YOU doing to practice JUSTICE — MERCY — HONESTY? Are you straining a fly out of your orange juice, Ms. Bryant, and swallowing a sewing machine?

> "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You clean the outside of your cup and plate, while the inside is full of things you have gotten by violence and selfishness. Blind Pharisee! Clean what is inside the cup first, and then the outside will be clean too!" (Mat. 23: 25-26)

Read Matthew 23:37-39 again, Anita, where Jesus said: "How many times have I wanted to put my arms round ALL your people . . ." THAT INCLUDES YOU MS. BRYANT — and — IT INCLUDES HOMOSEXUALS TOO!

Understand the Scriptures

Can you — reading these Scriptures — tell me that YOU ARE FREE FROM HYPOCRISY, Ms. Bryant, or have you not really cast your lot with the Pharisees?

There is more, much more, Ms. Bryant, with regard to the Scriptures. I could ask you to read Fr. John McNeill, Helmut von Thelecke, Dr. John Von Rohr, Derrick Bailey — to name only a few, theologians all — who have devoted their lives to studying and understanding the Scriptures. And they will say to you Ms. Bryant that the sins of Sodom were not what they have seemed to be. In the matter of interpreting Scripture, however, let me offer you this from the "DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II:"

> "Since God speaks in sacred Scripture through men in a human fashion, the interpreter of sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words." (No. 12)

Since this message has really been prepared to give ASSURANCE to the congregation God has called me to serve . . . and since I believe my charge from Christ Himself is to "Feed my sheep" — I will not belabor them in recounting the errors in your use of Holy Writ by continuing piece-by-piece demonstration to *you* and *others like you* that you do NOT HAVE THE ONLY KEY TO THE KINGDOM! But I assure you, there's more, lots more that I could share with you if indeed I had hope that you could be more enlightened.

The Choice: Feed the Lambs; Destroy Lives

In conclusion, I want to ask you a question, Ms. Bryant, and before you glibly reply or hypocritically answer, hear me out.

DO YOU LOVE GOD?
DO YOU LOVE JESUS CHRIST?
DO YOU LOVE HOMOSEXUALS?

DO YOU REALLY? Then — feed my sheep, feed my lambs — do nothing to DESTROY lives, but dedicate yourself to understanding and building lives. If you need help, Ms. Bryant, DON'T RUN TO THE LAW. Again, let me point you to the words of St. Paul, whom you admire and quote from so selectively:

> "If one of you has a dispute with a brother, how dare he go before heathen judges, instead of letting God's people settle the matter?"

That's from the first verse of the sixth chapter of I Corinthians, from which you elect to segregate and quote only verses 9, 10, and 11. Or this:

> "Before the time for faith came, however, the LAW kept us all locked up as prisoners, until this coming faith should be revealed. So the Law was in charge of us until Christ came, so that we might be put right with God through faith. Now that the time of faith is here, the Law is not longer in charge of us. IT IS THROUGH FAITH THAT ALL OF YOU ARE GOD'S SONS (and daughters) IN UNION WITH JESUS CHRIST." (Gal. 3:21-26)

The emphasis in the foregoing is mine, as is the inclusion of daughters — we all know that St. Paul was a male chauvinist (it was the "in thing" in his century). What has happened to your FAITH, Ms. Bryant, that you TURN to the LAW? And that you speak not of people breaking FAITH, but of needing to know GOD'S LAWS.

I know that I need not answer for you before God — I also know that YOU cannot answer for me and mine. As I ask you not to judge me and my people, I assure you I will afford you the same privilege.

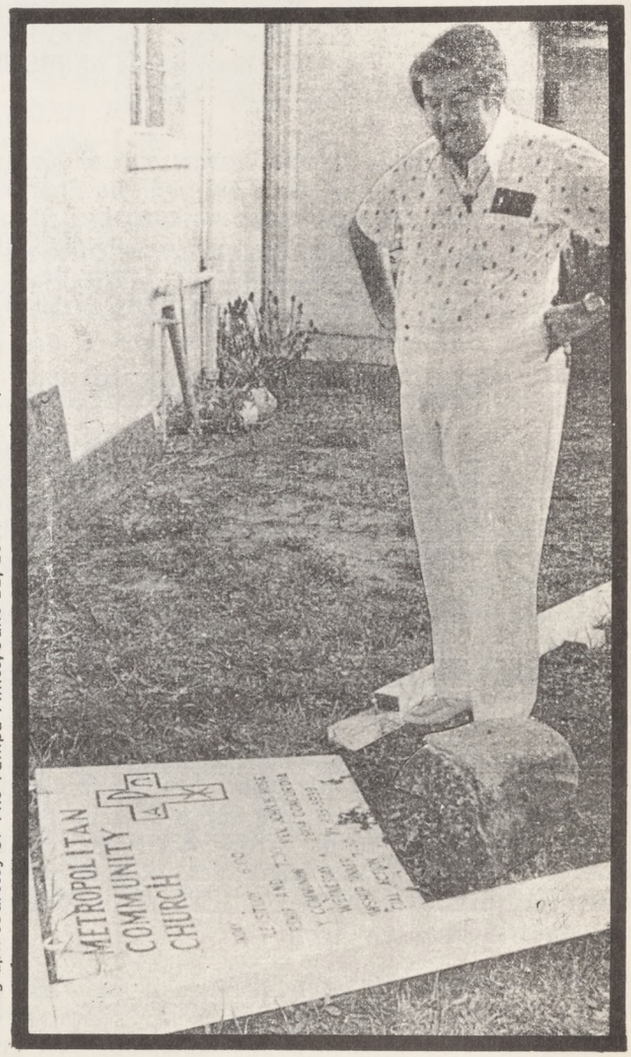
In fact, in view of your statement that our children will be subjected to godless d

you I will afford you the same privilege.

In fact, in view of your statement that our children will be subjected to godless deviate homosexuals in the classroom, I would like to extend an invitation to join with us at worship in Metropolitan Community Church here — or in any of our 110 congregations. Our doors are open to all who seek salvation, who are oppressed, and deprived of their rights. We pray that you will come to know that God loves you, as we know God loves us. We will continue to exercise this love by "feeding the lambs," and giving thanks to God for liberating us through Jesus Christ!

Yours, in His abundant Love,

Rev. Elder John H. Hose, Pastor
Metropolitan Community Church of Tampa



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Marge Ragona Takes to the Air Waves

Joe Martin, Marge Ragona, Bill Dunham

Marge Ragona, MCC Boston exhorter, has appeared on numerous television and radio programs in recent months. So much so, in fact, that one observer remarked, "she seems to be the darling of the air waves in this area."

Recently Marge and Joe Martin, Gay Legislation Chairperson, took on the editor of *American Opinion*, Bill Dunham on a Boston TV program, "Mass Reaction," on WNAC-TV. *American Opinion* is the magazine of the John Birch Society. The program was described as "not earth-shaking, but did some good locally."

She has participated in a segment on the WBZ-TV prime time (6:00 pm) news program dealing with gay parents.

She did a four hour radio show on WGBH dealing with homosexuality in general and specifically giving religious answers to Anita Bryant's "garbage", as it was described. This show was so positive that Dr. Loveless of Gordon-Conwell Seminary (the Fuller Evangelical "Fundamentalist" seminary of the east) asked for equal time.

A similar half hour show was aired on WBUR-radio in Providence on a 6:30 pm time slot debating Baptist minister, Rev. Enio Cutini, "whom we 'loved' to death," it was said.

She did a half hour interview on "Club 44" on WGBH-TV vs. Massachusetts State Senator David Locke who had attached a referendum rider to a piece of public employment human rights legislation.

She was seen on three major newscasts in Boston on the day of the 1977 gay pride parade in that city: WGBH-TV, WBZ-TV and WNAC-TV.

Marge is serving as technical advisor for a 1½ hour show to be aired on WBZ-TV on July 26th dealing with gayness, gay rights, and "gay legislation."

In summary, Marge told *In Unity*, "We are getting excellent publicity for MCC in New England, mostly because we've been able to answer when people have asked, 'What's Anita Bryant talking about?' "

National Gay Leadership Conference

Reverend Troy Perry, Moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, has announced a National (United States) Gay Leadership Conference to be held in Denver on July 29th and 30th.

The Conference, to be held at the First Unitarian Church of Denver at 1400 Lafayette Street, is co-sponsored by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches; the National Gay Task Force; the Gay Rights National Lobby, and Dignity, the nation's four largest organizations concerned with gay rights.

Reverend Perry announced that the purpose of the National Gay Leadership Conference is to develop skills and to learn ways to most effectively get the message of gay rights across to the public and to the political leaders at all levels of government.

"We must learn from our experiences in Dade County," Reverend Perry declared, "and we must go forward with the message of human rights in an organized, rational and effective manner."

Every recognized organization involved in gay rights in the country will be invited to send two delegates to this national conference. The Conference will open with keynote addresses by Ginny Apuzzo, of GRNL and Reverend Troy Perry, followed by a panel discussion and analysis of "The Lessons Learned from Dade County."

The Conference will continue Saturday with presentations on what can be expected from the federal government and the Carter Administration. Afternoon presentations will center around teaching and developing skills for effective lobbying at local and state levels. Particular emphasis will be placed on how to get media attention and how to use it effectively once you get it.

The Conference will conclude Saturday night with developing Resolutions for Action and with a closing address by a nationally prominent legislator.

The conference will be a teaching and learning experience in which the leaders of gay rights organizations will determine "HOW TO" get the job done.

"We know there is tremendous energy and talent throughout the country which is literally bursting at the seams. This conference will lend direction and cohesiveness for political and social change across the country," Rev. Perry stated.

RELIGIOUS PRESS in "The Valley of Decision"

by Maury Johnston

While we tend to view today's national press as a powerful, essentially non-religious conglomerate smothering the country with its inexhaustible supply of news, stories, and opinions, few of us are aware enough of the strongly influential *religious* press which runs the gamut of theological variety from the toxic disseminations of church sanctioned bigotry, to the courageous convictions of insightful individuals who are shouting with the silent voice of the printed page a prophetic message to the stagnant, institutional church.

With the "advent of Anita" on the pseudo-religious scene drumming up support for her battle against gay rights, various church periodicals have been forced into the uncomfortable position of having to take an open stand with regard to the whole homosexual issue, especially as it relates to ecclesiastical acceptance. True to form, most branches of the Christian Church have chosen to "sit in the seat of the scornful" as the self-appointed Sanhedrin of the Faith, nodding their heads in agreement with the female Caiaphas who is seeking the legal crucifixion of all homosexuals.

To be sure, there is a minority of thinking clerics within the confines of the established religious order whose consciences have been touched by the Spirit, and as a result, they are beginning to sense a deep concern for those segments of society which in the past have been designated as the "moral outcasts" of the Church. Yet, for the most part, as the following excerpts make abundantly clear, the Church has continued its long standing reputation for backward thinking, and an inability to accept social change within the context of general Christian principles. A prime example is the editorial comment of Raymond Cox in the June 1977 issue of *Foursquare Church Advance*, the official publication for that denomination.

> *"I'm a Gay Christian" brazenly boasted lapel pins sported by some supporters of a "Gay Rights" bill at a hearing conducted by an Oregon State Senate Committee considering such legislation. The Bible, however, thunders that such deviates are not Christians at all . . . But nowadays a drive is underway to portray the practice as normal. It is never normal. Only if a pair of homosexual males produced a child through their abominable union – only if a pair of lesbians did likewise – could any pretense of normalcy be propagated.*

The ultimate logic of such reasoning can only force us to conclude that childless heterosexual marriages are not normal, and, therefore, abominable. If reproduction, or the ability to procreate, is to be considered the sole criterion for the normalcy of a sexual relationship, then homosexuals surely must not be alone in the Foursquare Church list of "abnormal minorities"!

Not to be outdone, *The Alliance Witness*, a magazine of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, in a June 15, 1977, editorial, lapsed further into social dementia by reeling in horror and disgust at the very thought of treating gay people as whole human beings with certain inalienable rights.

> *Who could have anticipated that homosexuals and lesbians, some of them in religious garb, would today be crusading openly for "rights"? A decade ago even the words were too shameful to be mentioned in a respectable publication. Now gays are militantly asserting their right to equality under the law.*

Later on in the same article, gay people are referred to as having "twisted minds."

Common to both editorials is a consistent appeal to the Bible for magical "proof texts" which, after being quoted, are never examined in their historical or social contexts. When making use of I Corinthians 6:9 in their respective articles, both writers chose to demonstrate their poor scholarship by quoting from the Revised Standard Version, considered by many to be the worst translation that we have from the Greek text of this verse as it relates to the homosexual question. Interestingly enough, there were numerous cries from among the ranks of these churches denouncing the RSV as a "communist conspiracy," and "the Devil's Bible" when it was first released by the National Council of Churches. Yet now, in desperation, they seem to be willing to use any source which can give the appearance of supporting their homophobic prejudices.

However, the most serious implications exemplified in both articles was the assertion that gay people cannot be Christians, for it borders perilously close to approximating the sin against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29), i.e., attributing to Satan and his deception the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives which have caused us to confess the Name of Christ as Saviour. It is also an anti-christ message in its most insidious form, for it claims that because we are gay, Jesus Christ is not, and cannot be coming in our flesh, permeating our lives through the Holy Spirit. "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." (2 John 7) First century Gnostics did not believe that Jesus had actually taken on a fleshly body through the Incarnation, for they considered matter to be evil. In the same way, there are twentieth century Gnostics in the Christian Church who are denying that Christ can be coming in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27), because they believe our sexuality to be inherently evil. Therefore, such a line of reasoning can only be seen as a modern variation of an old anti-christ doctrine, and must be rejected as condemned of God.

Perhaps the capstone to the typical fundamentalist attitude in the church press was given in the June 15, 1977 issue of *Christianity Today*, where the orange juice queen was practically elevated to the place of a modern prophetess.

> *So thank you, Anita Bryant, for your willingness to see your public Christian testimony go down the tube for what you perceive to be a Christian principle. You reached out for God rather than Las Vegas. So did the prophets before you.*

In a slightly different vein, the Jesuit publication *America* has what could easily be awarded the quarterly MCC award for inconsistent journalism (if we had one). In their June 25, 1977 edition, appeared an editorial entitled "Homosexuality and Civil Rights," where they make the important admission that:

(Mr. Johnston is author of a forthcoming booklet, Gay Theological Perspectives: An Evangelical Answer to Anita Bryant, *to be published by Universal Fellowship Press, and appears in this issue of In Unity.)*

. . .the use of biblical injunctions against homosexuality by Anita Bryant was hopelessly fundamentalistic. Theological scholarship, whether scriptural or ethical, recognizes today that the application of Scripture texts that condemn homosexuality is dubious at best. The phenomenon of homosexuality, as it is understood today, covers too wide a range of inclinations and behavior patterns to be subject to sweeping condemnations."

Yet in the same article they deny that gays have any need for civil rights. *"The argument in Dade County was not about the civil rights of individuals but but about the social acceptability of certain kinds of sexual behavior . . . the refusal by the voters to accept an ordinance both unnecessary and in conflict with community values was justified."* What they *don't* say, however, is that such behavior has not been considered socially acceptable in our culture precisely *because* of the Church and its use of the Bible to condemn homosexuality as an abomination before God. From their viewpoint, despite 2000 years of oppression at the hands of ecclesiastical authority, which in turn has heavily influenced Western society on this issue, laws such as the Miami ordinance are still "unnecessary"!

Other churches are not so sure that homosexuality = sin. The *Presbyterian Survey* for June 1977, published excerpts from a paper prepared by their Council on Theology and Culture, which made the cautious observation that *"in view of the complexity of the issue, the disagreement among Christians and the variety in the character and experience of homosexual persons, themselves, it seems unwise at this time to propose any one position as the position of our Church."* At the recent general synod of the United Church of Christ, that denomination declared that the Anita Bryant crusade and all she stands for *"represents a new reactionary movement which may eventually erode the civil rights of us all."* It also said that the church *"deplores the use of Scripture to generate hatred and the violation of civil rights of gay and bisexual persons."* Here at least, is an indication that there are a few rays of sunlight emerging amidst the cloudy array of darkened, religious homophobia.

One of the most surprisingly refreshing editorials to be found was discovered tucked away on the last page of the July 6-13, 1977 issue of *Christian Century*. Claiming to side with neither extreme in the broiling gay rights controversy, famed historian, author, professor, Dr. Martin Marty still managed quite successfully to aim some tongue-in-cheek "pot shots" at the Leviticus literalism of the Bryant forces. By consistently adhering to the precepts of Leviticus, Martin humorously concludes that only "conservative women vegetarians" could pass the scrutiny of Old Testament legalism unscathed. He then makes the ingenious observation that 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is just as embarassing to Anita & Company as it is a problem when applied against homosexuals.

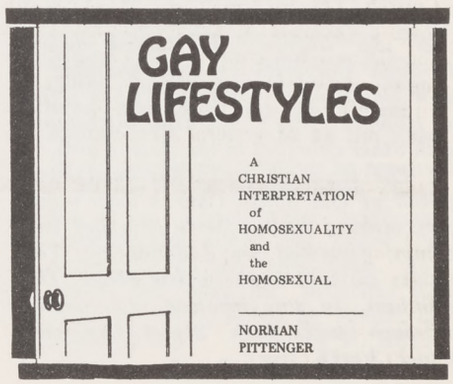
Finally, in Ms. Bryant's own favorite Bible verse, I Corinthians 6:10, homosexuals are told that they will not "inherit the kingdom of God." Nor will "the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers . . . nor drunkards . . . nor robbers," all of whom make life easy in the conservative Orange Juice churches because, of course, there are none of such. But those dots also mark the omission of the word "revilers."

Revilers won't inherit the kingdom. And while Anita often stuck to the text, her husband, Bob Green, did some macho reviling of homosexuals. Out he goes. Now I'd better quit, stopping just short of reviling him. *Otherwise the kingdom will have to get along without both Bob Green and me.*

Despite the "ostrich philosophy" of anti-gay evangelicals who are hiding their heads in the sand of biblical literalism, not to mention the non-committal approach of certain main line denominational periodicals, there are nevertheless, a few, who, like a voice crying in the wilderness, are proclaiming that every mountain of oppression must be flattened, and every crooked path of prejudice be made straight. One such journal of Christian opinion is *Christianity and Crisis*. The combination May 30 and June 13, 1977 issue was devoted entirely to the discussion of gay people in relation to the Church. In their editorial frontispiece titled "The Debate on Homosexuality, We Vote For Change," the editors state that Christendom has entered its "Valley of Decision" and can no longer side-step the thorny problem of how to view homosexuality.

The difficulty for the churches is that to suspend judgment is no longer a possible course. When decisions are necessary, we have to presume that God's will can be discerned, if we have eyes to see, in the evidence at hand. In our reading of the evidence there is no longer a tenable case for excluding homosexuals from full *participation in the life of the church and of society . . . As an independent religious journal C & C does not speak for the churches but to the churches. A journal of opinion may risk its survival by voicing the wrong opinions, but a journal of opinion without opinions has no reason to survive . . . In determining human and ethical uses of sex, it is not the laws of biology we must consult but the law of love. To say this is not to relativize the scriptures or to make our burdens light; on the contrary, it is a hard saying. . . . It is our view, however, that in the church the burden of proof rests on those who would maintain the policy of condemnation and ostracism that is our inheritance. And we believe that not the least consequence of a shift in this policy will be liberation and enlightenment for ourselves.*

It is statements like this which remind us that there is a prophetic remnant of believers in the Body of Christ calling upon the Church to re-examine its corporate conscience. UFMCC is not alone. Although a minority in numbers, we are a majority in God. Even as we pass through the fiery furnace of prejudicial hate and religious bigotry, One like unto the Son of God is walking in our midst. While the national, religious press is busily engaged in the business of deciding upon the "validity" of our Christian experience as gay people, it is God in the courts of heaven who shall bring judgment upon their judgment. The Church has indeed been summoned to the Valley of *God's* Verdict, "for it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17), and whatever measure they have used to condemn us, according to our Lord Jesus Christ, that same measure shall be used against them (Luke 6:38). Let those who so smugly consign us to the consuming anger of God's wrath take heed, lest when they stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the pronouncement come upon them, "you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient" (Daniel 5:27).



SAMARITAN BACCALAUREATE SERVICE

RICHMOND, CHAPPELLE, UMBERTINO TO GRADUATE — FORMER DEAN PLOEN HONORED

Samaritan Theological Institute President, The Rev. Karen Wheeler, introduces The Reverend Richard Ploen — Founder and first Dean of Samaritan — at Baccalaureate Service where The Reverend Elder Perry presented Rev. Ploen a plaque on behalf of the Institute's Trustees designating him Dean Emeritus of the school. photo by Peter — photographer

Sunday, June 26, a full house at the MCC of Valley Worship Center attended the Baccalaureate Service Of Samaritan Theological Institute.

Rev. Troy Perry preached. Each of graduating students gave testimonies: Lucia Chappelle, Ted Richmond, Angie Cumbertino.

President Karen Wheeler, Dean Jeffrey Pulling, members of faculty and graduating students marched in a traditional processional wearing academic gowns, with faculty members wearing hoods indicating their academic degrees.

The graduation ceremony itself will be held at General Conference.

The Rev. Richard Ploen, founder of the school, long-time Dean, Trustee, former Elder of the Fellowship, and professor at Samaritan since the beginning, was honored with the surprise presentation of a plaque commemorating his years of service.

The plaque honoring Rev. Ploen reads:

The Board of Trustees
of
Samaritan Theological Institute
in recognition of
seven years of
faithful service
do hereby confer on
The Rev. Richard Ploen
the title of
DEAN EMERITUS
this 26th day of June
in the Year of Our Lord
1977

Unity and Understanding Goals of MCC Boston Project

BY RON CLEE

[This article, reprinted from The Way, *Boston MCC's newsletter, shows an example of a creative approach to Ministry in MCC. It is the story of MCC Boston's efforts to reach unity and understanding with the members of Old South Congregational Church in Boston, the first of a series of outreach moves.*

Last year MCC Boston's application for membership in the Council of Churches was unanimously turned down. Through prayerful creative thinking a plan was devised for setting up a series of 10-week visits of intensive interaction with other churches in the Boston area.

The ten-week series has been completed at Old South Church with members visiting each other's churches and homes, followed by a debriefing. The results are told in the article below. The members are now involved in a similar outreach with Park Street Congregational Church. rrm]

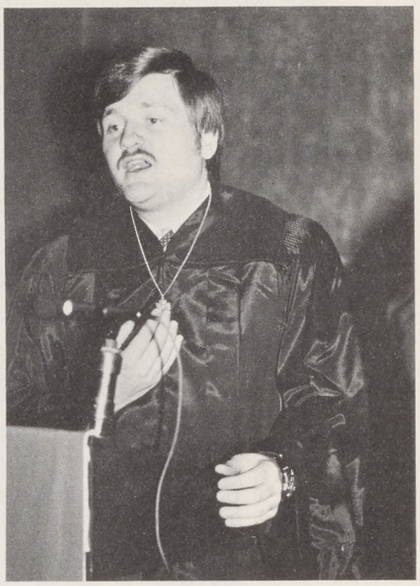
When the Metropolitan Community Church began its first in a series of outreach community campaigns, no one could foresee what the outcome would be. No program of this nature had been tried by any oppressed society in the past, and the mere thought of gay people confronting straights on an open "one to one" basis was a terrifying, yet daring undertaking to perceive.

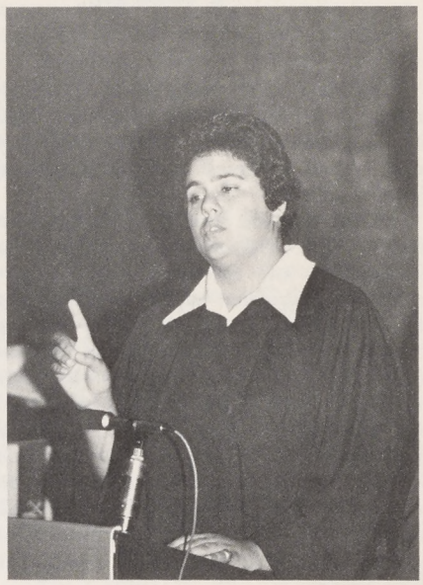
As Old South Congregational Church members greeted their new visitors with graciousness and friendliness they found a vast mixture of gays from today's society. The social and theological issues raised by both congregations achieved a true understanding between members and visitors. This recognition founded the beginning of an alliance which will carry forth a Christian message and witness for years to come.

The achievements of the outreach group were realized when Old South Church sponsored a meeting with U.C.C. delegates from the Massachusetts Council of Churches and the Metropolitan Community Church volunteers. The program was a great success.

The many courageous men and women volunteers which made up the MCC outreach group in their quest for unity and understanding between straight and gay Christians accomplished much more than their original goals. Their most significant accomplishment was the achievement in straight-gay society recognition. A realization that gays are people of all kinds, and have needs also. That these needs, church and non-church related, can be provided through understanding. That understanding can come about by honesty, discussion and determination.

Old South Church, its clergy and members, now agree that the main line straight churches must begin to minister to all peoples, to deal with the issues and take positive action toward change. This can be seen by the many friendships that





Samaritan Students who spoke at Baccalaureate Service (L - R) Lucia Chappelle, Ted Richmond and Angie Umbertino. Graduation ceremonies and award of diplomas will take place Saturday evening at General Conference in Denver. photo by Peter — photographer

have been established between Old South members and MCC of Boston. A vast understanding has been gained, and a true course toward Christian unification has begun.

It's time for some tough talk about outreach. The crushing defeat for gay rights at the polls in Miami demonstrates all too clearly the lack of outreach by the gay community into the culture as a whole. Marches and media campaigns alone are not going to turn things around. Continuing to lick our wounds in the coziness of the gay ghetto while we regard the straight world as our enemy is a disaster course that we can no longer afford to follow.

Now we need to begin the slow, painful process of educating our straight brothers and sisters as to who we really are. This can only be done with patience and love. Polarization of gays and straights has been fostered as much by gays as by straights. How many of us avoid straights as an openly gay person because it's just too much of a hassle? Don't be surprised then when your straight brothers and sisters act in an ignorant and prejudiced way. Very few gays have been helping them to act differently.

If people are going to change their attitudes, it will be because someone has cared enough about them to help them change, just as you as a gay person had to learn new attitudes about your own gayness. Each gay person, to do his or her share, needs to educate approximately nine straight people. Who are the nine straight people *you* are reaching out to with loving care and concern?

The outreach program at Old South Church is an example of the kind of work we need to be involved in. It is slow, tedious at times, requiring discipline and persistence effecting gradual change rather than dramatic breakthroughs. But it works. People do change through faithful efforts at bridge building and reconciliation. So before you condemn your straight brothers and sisters who have been indoctrinated from birth in fearful and prejudicial attitudes towards homosexuality, ask yourself how you are helping them to move into a better place.

We will continue our outreach to the traditional churches in the summer and the fall. There are at least nine straight people out there waiting for you to love them.

OPEN AIR PREACHERS

Our Lord preached His Sermon on the Mount in the open air. Peter, Paul, Stephen, Moses, Ezra, Elijah and other Bible preachers conducted open air meetings.

John the Baptist preached by the river side, Paul on Mar's Hill, Elijah on Mount Carmel and Stephen in the streets.

John Wesley exclaimed: "The world is my parish" and preached in the open air. Whitefield and others were noted open air preachers. They didn't wait for the people to come to them; they went where the people were and preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The man on the street heard the Gospel whether he received it or not. The results were always the same. Some were indifferent, some became angry, but, praise God, some believed and were saved. As a result, the open air preacher was loved by some, hated by others, but heard by all." —Sidney W. Hunter

* * * *

MCC NATIONAL EVANGELISTIC TEAM

"I'll fly away – oh Glory! – I'll fly away" – the music, the spirit was fairly rocking the little store front sanctuary, and I found myself totally caught up in it.

This was the fourth and last service held by the National Evangelistic Team in our area and the air was filled with a mixture of spiritual euphoria and sadness that these three friends were leaving. There were tears in my eyes as I looked around at my brothers and sisters who were as caught up in the mood of spiritual excitement and togetherness as I was. I think we all felt at that moment, that maybe this little study group could move the world for Christ as we had been told so often the past week. I had almost forgotten how skeptical I was before the first service.

There were several in our group who were not at all sure that we wanted to host the MCC National Evangelistic Team. We had heard good reports from other churches, but also knew that our group was smaller and much more sedate than many other churches. Many of us, myself included, came from backgrounds where an "evangelist" was usually a flamboyant rip-off. I could almost visualize "hell-fire" preaching, healing lines, and constant pleas for money. Two or three of our members visualized just the opposite. They were convinced that the team was probably preaching and teaching radicalism and our people just weren't interested in radical anything. But we did host them, and before the second service was over we had found out that we were both right and wrong and the congregation was already asking when we could have them again.

The success of this team was largely due to the spirit that their music generated. We were a little surprised when they brought their own organ and set up a P.A. system in this little sanctuary, but they obviously knew what they were doing. Rev. Anderson's talent on the organ and the joy that these people found in music soon was contagious. The singspirations had even our most sedate people clapping their hands and singing. The specials were the most moving thing in the service. There were more than a few tear-filled eyes when Annette's voice rang through the building. She has a beautiful voice, but it was the sincere love of God that radiated from her that caught people up. Rev. Anderson's voice shook the rafters when he sang "How Much More," but it was the obvious fact that he *believed* the words of that song that brough tears to so many eyes.

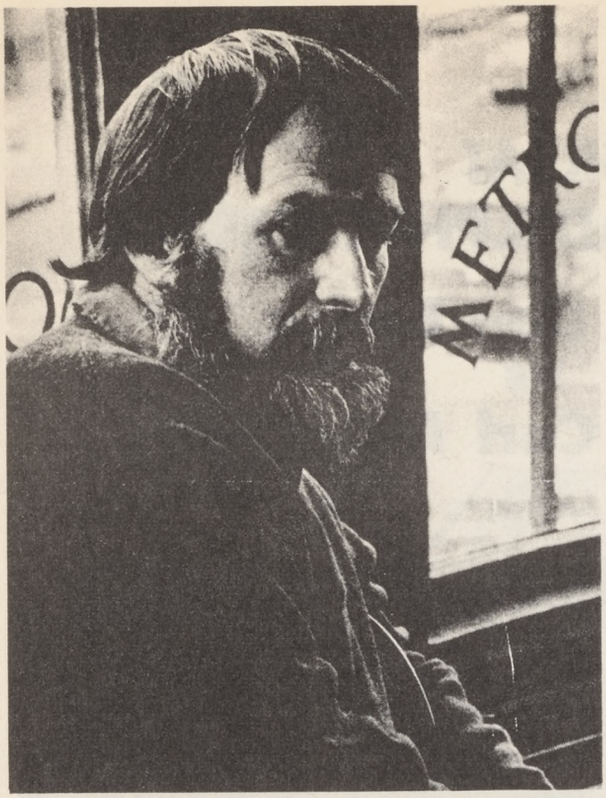
The preaching was sometimes "loud Pentecostal" and sometimes quietly moving, but *always* the pure gospel. Some nights we left the services filled with laughter and fun; then some nights we left deeply moved and grateful to God for loving us. We will laugh many times to come at some of the experiences that Ron and Jeanne shared with us. And we will not soon forget the sermons that had our entire group at the altars. The two new people we added to our group this week will never forget the team.

The workshops the team held on Saturday were one of the most surprising things that happened to us. They were informative, "down to earth," and most of all, fun. I never expected to have so much fun and learn so much at the same time.

We learned much about the three people in the team during their week of services. We learned that they are commissioned by the Board of Elders but are not financially supported by any person or organization. The only financial support they receive are the love offerings taken at each service. Far from the constant pleae for money I expect
stant pleas

port they receive are the love offerings taken at each service. Far from the constant pleas for money I expected, these people don't even take their own offerings. I still find it hard to believe that three people can live on faith that God will provide, but they have managed to do so for almost a year.

We had been told, during services, about "Shasta" (that 18-year-old school bus they live in); so we were all anxious to see it when they gave tours after the



REV. GILBERT

REV GILBERT'S BAPTISM BY FIRE

last service. We had been told that all three of them had sold everything they owned to buy the bus and convert it to a mobile home (doing all the work themselves), but I don't think any of us were prepared for the comfort and spaciousness that we found inside. Painted outside with white house paint it's starting to look a little worn after a year but once inside it is definitely "home" to Ron, Jeanne and Annette.

Rev. Anderson, an ordained minister of UFMCC, had been an evangelist before joining the fellowship. He served for three years as pastor of Ft. Worth MCC where he met Jeanne and Annette. The most striking thing about Rev. Anderson is his talent for generating joy and excitement in those around him. I never knew that loving the Lord could be so much fun.

Annette Beall is the songstress of the team. Blessed with a beautiful voice she is always careful to give God the Glory. She has the gift of easy and unaffected conversation that draws people to her. Annette was raised in a strong Christian home and worked in a hospital business office before going on the evangelistic field.

Jeanne Leggett is an exhorter out of the Houston church. Previously she was a director of nurses in a large convalescent center. One of the sermons that Jeanne delivers is her personal testimony — a sermon that none of us will soo forfet. Jeanne is a small woman, but we were all amazed at the large voice and the dynamic preaching that came from that small package. She has a smile and twinkle in her eye that makes everyone want to hug her.

This has been *a week* that none of us will forget. As we saw these three people board their bus and start off to the next church, we were sad to see them go, but the spirit of excitement and the love for Jesus remain with us. I am grateful to them for sharing with us, and when they are in our area again, you can be sure this church will host them.

The Rev. Joseph Gilbert, pastor of MCC Miami, was there, very much there, during the campaign for the repeal of the civil rights for gay people in Dade County.

His keen analysis of the situation is shown in this address prepared for the Hialeah City Council:

"Good Evening. I am the Reverend Joseph Gilbert of Miami. I am the Pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church here. A Church which has a special outreach to homosexual women and men. Because of my total dedication to Christian Principles and my own sexual orientation, I have a duty to address you this evening on the motion of the honorable Mayor of Miami Springs (on the motion of the honorable Commissioner from Coral Gables).

The issue that has been placed before you tonight is one of human and civil rights. The ordinance in question does not deal with matters of morality nor even lifestyle. It deals with the very fundamental Constitutional Rights of all citizens. The arguments that are made by representatives of Save Our Children are false and misleading. Anyone who wants to take the time to research the problem of child abuse or child molestation will find that the over-whelming majority of sex crimes committed against children involve heterosexual males and young girls.

But I really do not wish to take up our time by responding to the arguments of "Save Our Children", other than to point out that their apparent major argument is that of employing homosexual teachers in our schools. I do believe this deserves some discussion.

First, there are presently in excess of 38 communities across the country which have guaranteed freedom from discrimination to their homosexual citizens. This, of course, includes the freedom to teach. None of those communities have fallen into the ocean, or been destroyed by fire, plague, or drought. These communities include large metropolitan cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Columbus, Ohio, Ithaca, NY, Portland, Oregon, Austin, Texas, Detroit, Michigan and Washington DC. In April of 1975, the City Council of Minneapolis sent a letter to the Minnesota Legislature recommending that they pass legislation which would extend such protection on a state-wide basis.

Secondly: The ordinance which the Dade County Commission passed is identical to that passed in many communities across the country and has the American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association, the American Associaion for the Advancement of Science, the American Public Health Association, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association

Please turn to page 43

THE GREAT PHILADELPHIA DEBATE

Rev. Don Borbe vs Rev. Carl McIntire

MCC Pastor, The Rev. Don Borbe, debated gay liberties with the Rev. Dr. Carl McIntire, the famous anti-communist, on July 12 in full view of the Liberty Bell in downtown Philadelphia.

The event was page one news in several Philadelphia dailies and drew photo features in others.

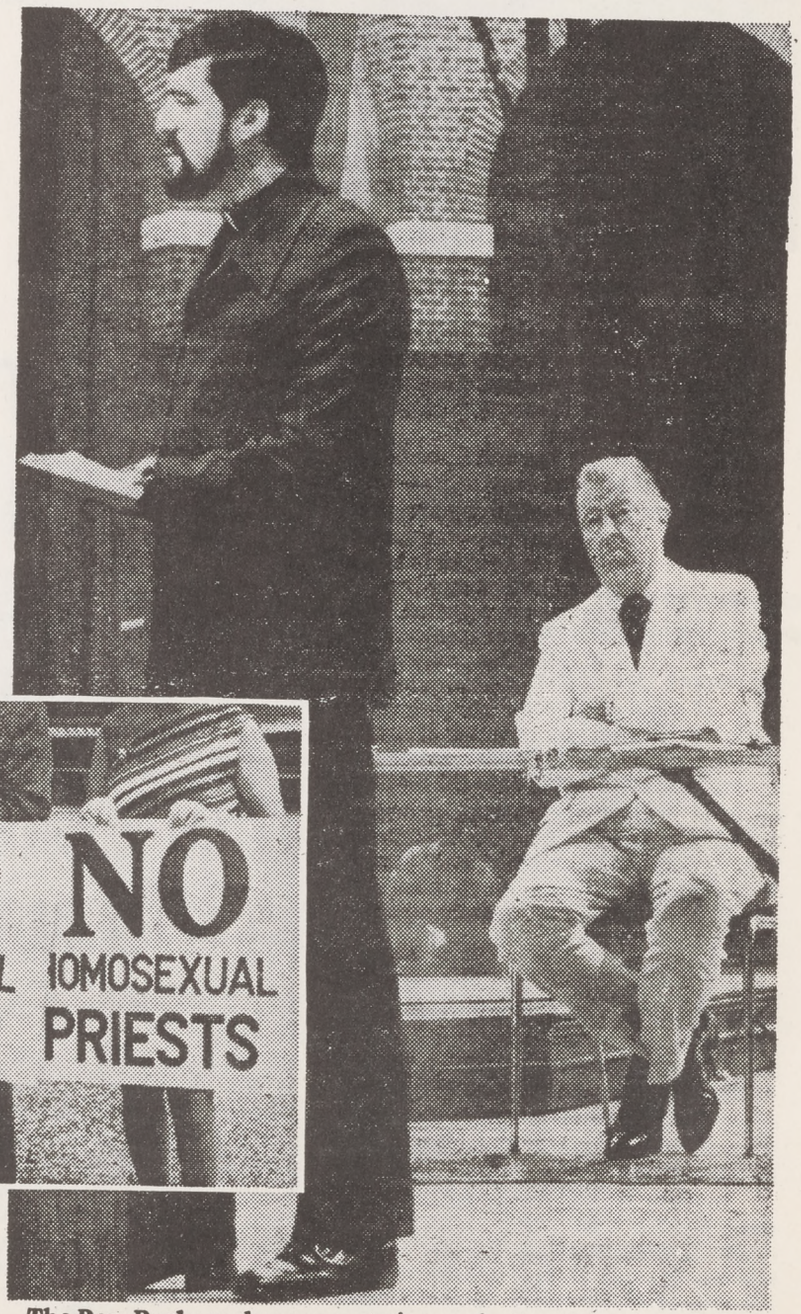
Mr. McIntire, president of the International Council of Churches, declared, "homosexuals never produce fruit."

The two debated at Independence Mall on the Bible and homosexuality. Mr. McIntire asked for the debate and brought with him, many by bus, about 250 followers from his headquarters in Collingswood, NJ.

About 75, mostly homosexual and from MCC Philadelphia ,came to support Rev. Borbe. "Passions sometimes ran high between the two groups," said the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Sidewalk arguments broke out preceding the debate.

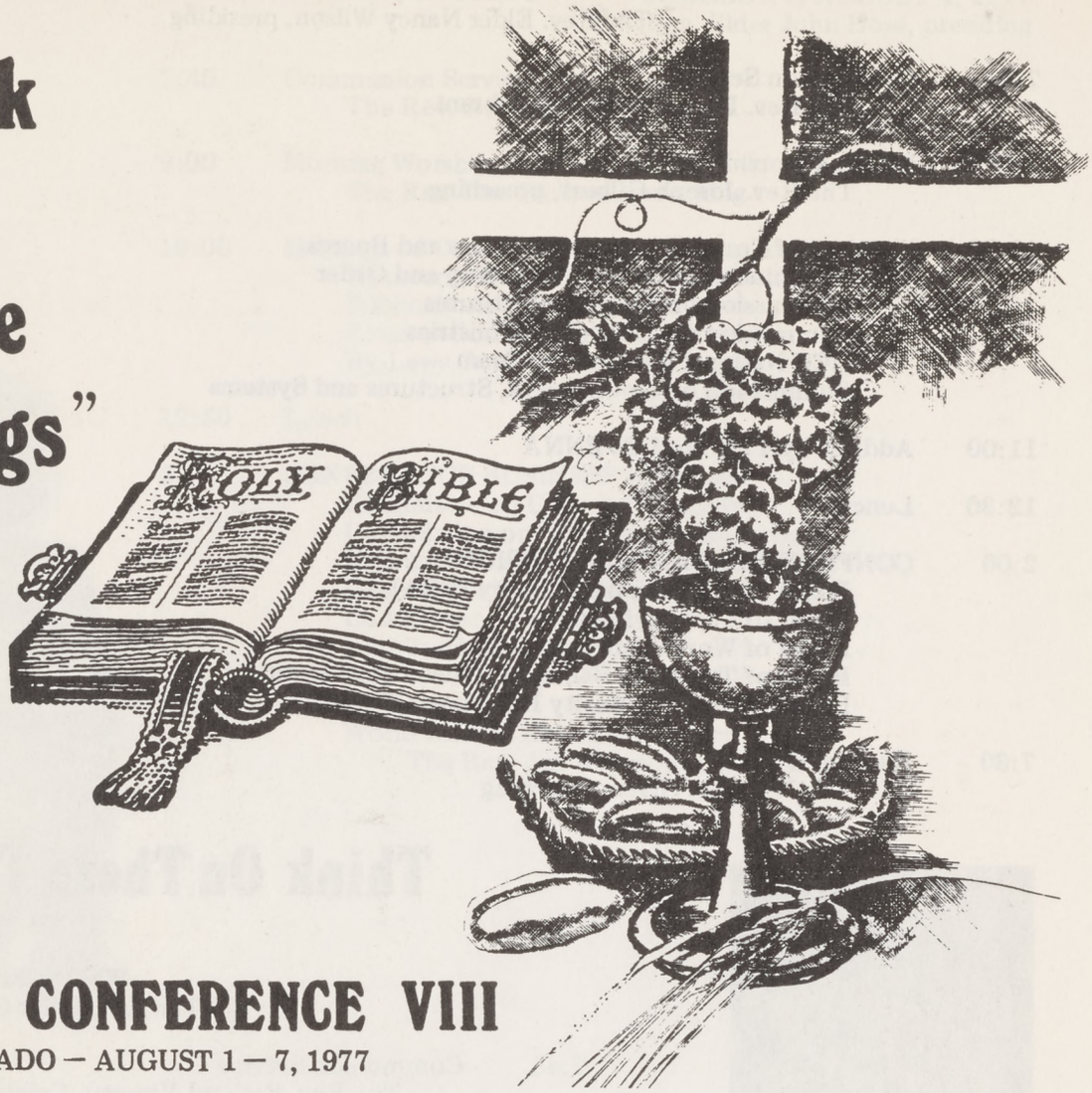
Rev. Borbe explained the Bible passages and described his own youth and "sensitive and beautiful" love affair with a fellow ministerial student. Some of his supporters sang, "We Shall Overcome" at the end of the heated debate. Some of those present rushed to the stage to congratulate one or the other; some wanted to argue a particular point. After a heated exchange, one man called Rev. Borbe "a pervert" and walked away. "God bless you," Rev. Borbe replied. In the eyes of some of the reporters, that just about sums it up. Street interviews indicated that everybody seemed to leave with the views they came with.

Philadelphia Daily News
photo by Elwood P. Smith



The Rev. Borbe makes presentation as the Rev. McIntire listens

"Think On These Things"



GENERAL CONFERENCE VIII

DENVER, COLORADO — AUGUST 1 — 7, 1977

MONDAY, AUGUST 1, 1977
The Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart, presiding

9:00 Opening Communion Service
The Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart, preaching
The Rev. David Farrell, Celebrant

10:00 Meetings of Commissions, Committees and Boards
Board of Institutional Ministry (USA)
Board of Campus Ministry
Board of World Church Extension
Board of Trustees / Samaritan Theological Institute
Finance Committee
By-Laws Committee

12:30 Lunch

2:00 CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Seating of Delegates
White Paper
Treasurer's Report
Priority I By-Laws

7:30 Evening Worship
The Rev. Austin Amerine, preaching

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1977
The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, presiding

7:45 Communion Service
The Rev. Bonnie Daniel, Celebrant

9:00 Morning Worship
The Rev. Joseph Gilbert, preaching

10:00 Meetings of Commissions, Committees and Boards
Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order
Commission on Religious Institutes
Commission on Innovative Ministries
MCC National Evangelistic Team
Commission on Government, Structures and Systems

11:00 Address by TED McILEVENNA

12:30 Lunch

2:00 CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Board of Institutional Ministry (USA)
Board of Campus Ministry
Board of World Church Extension
Board of Trustees / Samaritan Theological Institute
Priority I and/or Priority II By-Laws

7:30 Evening Worship
The Rev. Jim Glyer, preaching

Think On These Things.

Phillippians 4:4-8

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 1977
The Rev. Elder Carol Cureton, presiding

7:45 Communion Service
The Rev. Richard Vincent, Celebrant

9:00 Morning Worship
The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, preaching

10:00 Meetings of Commissions, Committees and Boards
Committee on Church Hymnody
Commission on Christian Social Action
Commission on Christian Education
Washington, D.C. Field Office Representatives
Committee on Lay Concerns
By-Laws Committee

12:30 Lunch

2:00 CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order
Commission on Religious Institutes
Commission on Innovative Ministries
MCC National Evangelistic Team
Commission on Government, Structures and Systems
Priority I and/or Priority II By-Laws

7:30 Evening Worship
Liturgical Service coordinated by The Rev. Stan Harris
The Rev. Elder Carol Cureton, preaching

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 1977
The Rev. Elder John Hose, presiding

7:45 Communion Service
The Rev. Jim Hill, Celebrant

9:00 Morning Worship
The Rev. Dee Jackson, preaching

10:00 Meetings of Commissions, Committees and Boards
Ministerial Credentials and Affairs Committee
Publications Department
Finance Committee
By-Laws Committee

12:30 Lunch

2:00 CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Committee on Church Hymnody
Commission on Christian Social Action
Commission on Christian Education
Washington Field Office
Committee on Lay Concerns
Priority II By-Laws

7:30 Evening Worship
World Church Extension Service
The Rev. Jan Weymouth, preaching

FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 1977
The Rev. Elder Troy Perry, presiding

7:45 Communion Service
The Rev. Larry Uhrig, Celebrant

9:00 Morning Worship
The Rev. Stan Roberts, preaching

10:00 Meetings
District Coordinators' Nominating Committee
for the position of Elder
Seminars conducted by S.T.I.

12:30 Lunch

2:00 BUSINESS SESSION
Ministerial Affairs and Credentials Committee
Department of Publications
Finance Committee
Presentations of Resolutions and Action Items from
Committees, Commissions and Boards

7:30 Evening Worship
The Rev. Elder Freda Smith, preaching

SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1977
The Rev. Elder Freda Smith, presiding

7:45 Communion Service
The Rev. Jim Harris, Celebrant

9:00 Morning Worship
Ms. Susan Savell, preaching

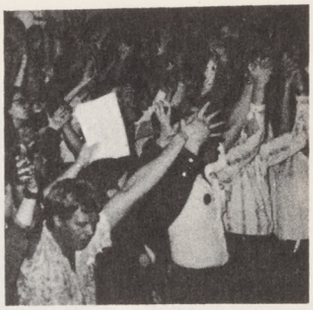
10:00 Open Forum with Susan Savell
Optional meeting time for Committees, Commissions and Boards

12:30 Lunch

2:00 BUSINESS SESSION
Election of Elders
Presentations of Resolutions and Action Items from Committees, Commissions and Boards

7:30 Evening Worship
Special Service of Ordination (with Graduation Ceremonies for Samaritan Theological Institute).
The Rev. Elder John H. Hose, preaching

Susan Savell



MS. SUSAN SAVELL

Ms. Savell presently works for the United Church of Christ Board of Homeland Ministries as Secretary for Liberation Church Development and on the staff of the Advisory Commission on Women in Church and Society.

She is a Member of United Church of Christ Women's interstaff team. Chairperson of the Board of Homeland Ministries Staff Evangelism Commitee, she has served as one of the staff members for the UCC preliminary study on human sexuality.

Susan is Staff Associate for the National Council of Churches Division of Higher Education, and has served on the Task Force on Higher Education and Criminal Justice; and has served as a prison chaplain. For the National Council of Churches of Christ, Ms. Savell served as consultant to the Commission on Women in Ministry.

She received her Master of Arts Degree from Columbia University in Biblical Studies in 1970 and a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in 1975.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 7, 1977
The Rev. Elder James Sandmire, presiding

10:00	Choral Meditation
10:30	Morning Worship The Rev. Troy Perry, preaching The Rev. Heather Anderson, Children's Sermon
12:30	Lunch
2:00	Address by GREGORY BAUM
4:00	BUSINESS SESSION (if needed)
7:00	Singspiration
7:30	Evening Worship The Rev. James Sandmire, preaching The Rev. Bob Arthur, Children's Sermon

GREGORY BAUM

Gregory Baum, professor of Theology and Religious Studies, at St. Michaels College in the University of Toronto, has accepted an invitation to address a convocation during the General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, to be held on Sunday, August 8, this year in Denver.

Dr. Baum, a recently laicized priest of the Augustinian Order within the Roman Catholic Church, has a wide reputation throughout the world as a progressive, reform theologian. He is generally recognized as one of the leading contributing theologians to the work of the Vatican II Ecumenical Council during the sixites.

While he has subjected a wide variety of current issues to theological scrutiny, Dr. Baum has spent considerable time on the church's attitude toward Jews, on women's role in the church, on celibacy for the clergy, and on the church's need for radical renewal and involvement in the pressing issues in the world.

He has spoken and written on the subject of homosexuality, calling to question the church's traditional theology and policy on the subject. In a talk given in Toronto in 1974, he questioned the traditional rationale that homosexuality was contrary to "nature," stating that human nature has been always categorized in Christianity as ideally being a spirit of mutuality, and that there is much evidence that homosexual love shows as much potential as heterosexual love for leading individuals to that ideal of mutuality.

Think On These Things.

Phillippians 4:4-8

AN EVANGELICAL ANSWER TO ANITA BRYANT

Gay Theological Perspectives

INTRODUCTION

It was with deep concern and grave alarm that this booklet is dedicated to the spiritual enlightenment of Anita Bryant and her militantly fundamentalist army of supporters. The implications of her recent "victory" against the gay community of Miami are only too apparent. With the ferocious zeal characteristic of mis-guided fanaticism, she seems bent on a relentless holy war to deprive all gay women and men of the basic civil rights afforded to any other citizens of this land.

Concerned, evangelical Christians, both gay and non-gay, deplore in the strongest terms, not only the tactics, but the bigoted beliefs with which Anita Bryant has sought to saturate the mass media concerning the "evils" of homosexuality. Her statements concerning the nature, life style, and potential "threat" of gay people to the children of our society reveal virtually a total ignorance on her part with regard to these important subjects. Almost every accusation which she and her organization, Save Our Children, Inc., has made against homosexuals, has been soundly contradicted by numerous experts in the fields of psychology, psychiatry and criminology. Even her clouded and emotional theology is being repudiated by increasing numbers of thoughtful theologians throughout the nation. Obviously, Anita's credentials of infallibility in areas of disputed theological and sociological controversy have in no way been demonstrated to us!

Many of Ms. Bryant's accusations against gay people have been calculated to incite the ignorant, prejudiced, and misinformed, through a crusade which carries with it the spirit of the Salem witch-hunters in a campaign which could easily erupt into the fiery stakes of Inquisition hate. "Kill a Queer for Christ" was the bumper sticker battle-cry of many who supported her drive against gays in Dade County; a fitting commentary on the "Christian" virtues of Anita's unholy crusade.

Sensitive Christians find her continual identification of her cause with the will of God to be a gross violation of the Third Commandment's basic spirit and intent; for to use the Name of the Lord as an instrument in oppressing others and denying to certain people their human rights is truly to use God's Name for blasphemous purposes. Anita's attempt to take away the basic rights essential to human dignity for homosexuals in the name of Jesus Christ, is, in fact, alienating thousands of gay people from the love and self-acceptance which the Lord has to offer them precisely because of her invoking God's Name in such a cause. Beward Anita, for your declarations to the effect that one cannot be a practicing Christian homosexual puts you under the censure of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Woe to you . . . hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven in front of people, for you do not enter in youselves; nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." (Matthew 23:13).

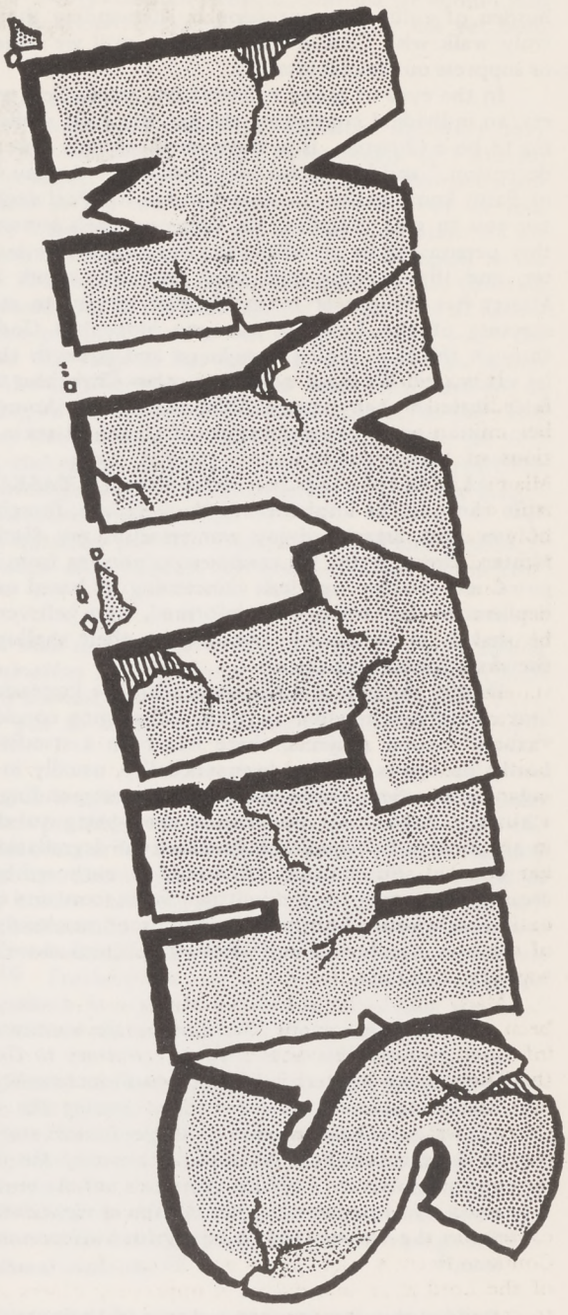
Unfortunately, like the Pharisees of old, Ms. Bryant and her associates seem to place greater value in the stony letter of the Law whose glory has faded (2 Corinthians 3:7-11), rather than in the resplendent, eternal emanations of love and acceptance through Jesus Christ which the Spirit has made available to us. Such blind, fundamentalist legalism chooses to ignore the haunting spectre of thousands of gay Christians who confess the same Lord and Saviour as Anita professes. These gay Christians are leading responsible, decent life styles in their respective communities across the land. These gay believers stand as an open rebuke to her generalizations to the effect that all gay people are "human rot." The capitalization that Save Our Children, Inc. has made of the "fringe element" in the gay community as representative of the *whole* spectrum of homosexual society is no more fair and/or accurate than focusing on pimps and prostitutes as being a typical microcosm of the heterosexual lifestyle. Most saddening of all, however, is the continuing appeal to the Holy Scriptures as a basis for coercing gays back into the closet of religious guilt, as well as a means of fanning the flames of demonic prejudice and reactionism. For all of these infractions against the Way of love as demonstrated to us through the example of Christ Jesus, we issue warning to you, Anita, as warring soldiers of our Lord and Saviour, that we who see through the shallowness and deceptiveness of your campaign have only begun to rise up in defiance of the prejudicial rhetoric and fear-mongering philosophy of your organization.

As concerned gay and straight Christians, we have every intention of being that proverbial "thorn in the flesh", and indeed, as our Lord said to Paul on the road to Damascus, "It is hard for you to kick against the thorns!" To this end, this booklet is dedicated to you and your supporters for an increased Biblical insight into a subject about which you seem to know so little.

Maury Johnston has an extensive background involving his participation in several religious bodies, including the Seventh-day Adventists, American Baptists, Lutherans, the Evangelical Free Church, and the charismatic movement. He has a unique insight into the various major theologies of Christendom. He is Los Angeles co-ordinator for Evangelicals Concerned and a member of Metropolitan Community Church, Los Angeles.

And although you were dead because of your sins and because you were morally uncircumcised, he has made you alive with Christ. For he has forgiven us all our sins; he has cancelled the bond which pledged us to the decrees of the law. It stood against us, but he set it aside, nailing it to the cross. On that cross he discarded the cosmic powers and authorities like a garment; he made a public spectacle of them and led them as captives in his triumphal procession. Allow no one therefore to take you to task about what you eat or drink, or over the observance of festival, new moon, or sabbath. These are no more than a shadow of what was to come; the solid reality is Christ's. [1]

— TIM CHAPMAN / Miami Herald Staff



The early Christian community of Colossae to which the Apostle Paul addressed this message, faced a situation which is parallel in many ways to the dilemma of those within the contemporary, gay, Christian community. These early believers were finding themselves pressured by the judgmental attitudes of persons outside the Faith, and at the same time condemned as "second class" citizens of God's Kingdom by the narrow minded factions within the Church itself. The same problem exists for gay Christians today, but it is not without a solution.

For centuries we of the gay community have been oppressed and looked upon with contempt by the great majority of society because of our sexual orientation, in much the same way that the Jewish nation eyed with disdain the Gentiles, calling them "unclean,"and "dogs." God made it clear that with the coming of Christ to redeem all people, such an attitude could no longer be tolerated by the Church.[2] Similarly, the self-revelation of God is continuing in our day, declaring through the conscience of the Body of Christ that such prejudice based on sexual orientation is no less sinful and person destroying than discrimination based on race, sex, color or creed.

The Apostle Paul's advice to the Colossians is equally applicable to us today — "Allow no one to take you to task!" In the early Church, the conflict over inclusion in the assem-

bly of believers revolved around conformance to the social and ethical mores of the Jewish tradition. Following the same patterns, there are many modern "Pharisees" in the Church even now who are seeking to impose on gay people an intolerable burden of guilt and oppression by demanding that we cannot truly walk with God in righteousness until we either renounce or suppress our sexual identity.

In the eyes of many conservative, evangelical, church leaders, an individual continuing the gay life style while still claiming to be a Christian, is to them obviously in a state of "Satanic deception," and bound for hell. But we of the gay Community of Faith know better, for even the Apostle Paul declared, "Who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant? Whether that person stands or falls is the business of the servant's Master, and that servant shall most certainly stand, because the Master has the power to enable that servant to stand."[3] As servants of the Lord we have no judge but God, and it is through the Holy Spirit's guidance and strength that we shall be vindicated. We must not allow other Christians to shake our faith through their homophobia, manifested through intimidation, and a gross misapplication of scriptural texts in order to reinforce their arguments.

"ALLOW NO ONE TO TAKE YOU TO TASK!" This principle can only be implemented by a vigilant, forceful rejection of any such attacks against our stand as gay disciples of the Master, Christ Jesus. We cannot stop persons from forming bigoted and derisive opinions concerning us based on their own intolerance, but we *can*, as informed, alert believers, refuse to be shaken or personally troubled by their shallow, anti-gay, pseudo-religious propaganda.

During the past several years, with the increasing curiosity and candidness relating to what were once considered to be "taboo" sexual subjects, there has been a steady increase of books on topics such as homosexuality, usually in a favorable vein. In reaction, there has been a corresponding upsurge in Christian books and periodicals attempting to describe the dangers of such "shameless homosexual degradation." One of these books, *The Untapped Generation*, authored by David and Don Wilkerson of Teen Challenge fame, contains thinly veiled contempt sprinkled generously with sanctimoniously slanderous statements clearly reveling a lack of spiritual as well as psychological perception.

> *The homosexual practices his sin because he chooses and professes his own wisdom, contrary to God's. He has substituted futile thinking for truth and reality . . . Overt homosexuality can be traced to serving the flesh, rather than God. When a person no longer honors and serves God, he is susceptible to becoming a slave of the flesh. Before one can become a life-time homosexual, he must ignore the voice of conscience, his knowledge of right and wrong, and follow a premeditated course of disobedience and stubbornness.*[4]

Besides showing ignorance, some of their statements seem almost sadly ludicrous. The accusation that gays "choose" their sexual orientation as "a premeditated course of disobedience and stubbornness" flatly contradicts the observations of most psychologists and researchers to the effect "that the impulses of both homosexuality and heterosexuality seem to develop quite unconsciously and that we emerge as one or the other, or some combination of both, quite apart from any conscious act of will or desire."[5]

In relation to the counselling of a young boy about his homosexual feelings, another author comments, "The one point of general agreement seems to be that our sexual tendencies have been developed, basically, by at least the age of puberty . . . The one honest, helpful response we can give this boy is to let him realize that, as far as we now know, he didn't consciously bring about, out of his own desire and will, the sexual feelings he now has."[6] It seems as if the Wilkersons are trying to make of all gay people a caricature of demonic rebelliousness, bent on thwarting God's purpose for their lives.

Such insinuations and/or accusations amount to slander against many Christian gays. Bearing false witness against one's neighbor is not exactly one of the virtues to be exemplified by a Christian minister or writer! The over-generalization of the Wilkersons reaches idiotic proportions when they claim, "A homosexual is a victim of a mind and imagination given over to the worship of the flesh. The homosexual feeds on filthy literature, on dirty pictures and lewd novels. His dreams, thoughts, and imagination have been taken over by the demons of lust."[7] All one need do is substitute the word heterosexual instead of homosexual in the above excerpt to observe just how distorted and a product of personal prejudice such comments really are. The above description does not apply to homosexuals in general, and especially gay Christians, any more than it could possibly apply to all heterosexuals. Furthermore, the authors have put themselves in the undefendable position of equating sexual desire with the "worship of the flesh." If such be the case, then all sex is hopelessly idolatrous and sinful. They forget that the sword of logic can cut both ways, for sexual desire, whether heterosexual or homosexual is the same natural urge at work within the person, only the personal object of that desire differing, depending on one's sexual orientation.

And of course, as a last, pitiable resort, demon possession has been listed as a constributing cause of the gay person's sexual impulses. When all else fails, blame the demons! Upon reflection, one wonders if the Wilkersons are of such a mentality as to sincerely believe that homosexual Michelangelo was "taken over by demons of lust" as he painted the creation scenes upon the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel?

'Backward Christian Soldiers, Marching As To War . . .'

Reprinted with minor changes from the Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, California

Gini Andrews, another evangelical writer, in her recent book *Sons of Freedom*, has even gone so far as to treat homosexuality and bisexuality as being in the same category with child-rape, kleptomania, and nymphomania.[8] She seems to be uninformed of the fact that both homosexuality and bisexuality are sexual orientations, whereas the other conditions listed are forms of either sexual or psychological *dis*-orientation and disorder. Even the American Psychiatric Association has officially removed homosexuality from their list of "mental disorders." While chastising most of the psychological and psychiatric pro-

fession for its reticence to claim a "cure" for homosexuals, she in seeming desperation appeals for support from the studies of psychoanalyst Irving Bieber, who claimed to have "cured" 30% of his homosexual patients. However, the conclusions of Bieber's study are far from being an indication of established scientific fact.

> *Bieber's book (1962) is a strange mixture of astute clinical observation and the worst kind of pseudo science. Bieber starts out with the assumption that homosexuality is a mental illness and finds, perhaps not surprisingly, that his clinical findings support his assumptions! Subjecting the responses of Bieber's colleagues to statistical analysis does not obviate the fact that these responses derive from a clinical procedure (psychoanalysis) which yields results which are still to a large extent speculative, and which represent primarily the original, very insightful, theoretical assumptions of the early analysts . . . The flaws in Bieber's method are two-fold: First, any inquiry that seeks to use only one kind of data to the exclusion of other data in order to substantiate a preconceived conclusion is not scientific; second, such data which does seem to support the preconceived conclusion may also be used, and perhaps even more advantageously to support many other conclusions which the investigator has rejected on no other grounds than prejudice."*[9]

Needless to say, it will take a lot more evidence than that of Irving Bieber to establish the "sickness" of gay people!

Still another book, *On Lonely Street With God*, by Duane Pederson, attempts to capitalize on the loneliness and guilt of most homosexuals in his appeal for them to accept Christ and be "changed."[10] But as one counselling guidance graduate has pointed out, the cause of loneliness and associated guilt feelings is not the homosexual orientation itself, but rather the pressure of society's (and that includes the Church) attitude towards it.

> *If the homosexual client says that he wants to change to heterosexuality because he's unhappy in "gay" life, I want to explore with him what is making him unhappy. Many times I have found that the basis of this unhappiness comes from the social attitudes that this country has towards homosexuality. Like any other minority group attempting to survive in a hostile, and bigoted environment, they too, succumb to unrelenting prejudice with reactions of self-doubt, self-blame, and self-hate. Many homosexuals have "bought" the myth of their own inferiority, and sadly have cooperated in their own destruction. This is understandable when every voice including parents and siblings, condemns and derides. I feel that therapy for the homosexual at some point must help him to love himself and take pride in the experiment of living that he has undertaken.*[11]

Most anti-gay evangelicals utilize the standard, time-worn guesses for the causes of homosexuality, such as a weak father image, fear of women, etc. none of which have proved either adequate or reliable as an over-all explanation of what is known to some as the "gay phenomenon." Ironically enough, the Jehovah's Witnesses in their publication *Awake!* proved the weakness of such arguments while at the same time they were trying to show the sinfulness and futility of the gay life style.

> *Others have said that lack of a strong father to lead the family contributes toward homosexuality. It cannot be denied that ideally a boy should have a manly example after which to pattern his life. (Eph. 6:1-4). However, if there were several boys in one family who had no father, should not all of them turn homosexual if that is the sole cause of the problem? Yet that rarely happens. Many boys have been reared with a lack of close fatherly direction and yet they did not turn to homosexuality.*[12]

Then they make the important confession which most evangelicals would do well to ponder: "There is virtual agreement among experts on this point: the exact cause of homosexuality is unknown."[13] As food for thought, perhaps we should also ask them if the exact cause of heterosexuality has yet been discovered?

THE OLD TESTAMENT

However much fundamentalist, Christian literature may seek to discredit and damn the gay Community of Faith for teaching or practice, evangelicals nevertheless cannot deny our incorporateness in the universal Body of Christ. For we too, recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the world today. The contention is often raised that we are violating the plain admonitions of the Bible against the practice of homosexuality. The problem here is not in ascertaining what the Bible says on this subject, but rather in arriving at an understanding of the implications that these statements have for us today, based upon the historical and social contexts of the times in which they were written. Another equally important factor is the meaning and extent of Biblical inspiration. As long as these avenues of investigation are left unexplored, an adequate insight into this controversy is impossible.

Without question the Old Testament condemns homosexual acts between men (women are not mentioned in this context).

> *You shall not lie with a man as with a woman: that is an abomination . . . If a man has intercourse with a man as with a woman, they both commit an abomination. They shall be put to death; their blood shall be on their own heads.*[14]

However, it is essential that we understand the immediate reaons for such prohibitions. To be barren was considered a disgrace in ancient Israel.[15] Fewer children meant fewer fighting men, and certain extinction for the Israelites, surrounded as they were by hordes of hostile nations. In this context, it is easy to see why homosexual acts were made unlawful, for it was another form of sexual activity which intentionally hindered procreation.[16] Furthermore, for a man to take the woman's submissive position in a sexual act with another man was considered abhorrent to the Israelites:

> *The entire socio-cultural functioning of the ancient Israelites was wrapped up in the radical separateness and inequality of the sexes. To refuse to observe such distinctions between the sexes either by a man's dressing in the accepted apparel of the opposite sex or by participating in sexual relations which appeared to substitute another man for a woman was, of course, strictly taboo within these cultural outlooks.*[17]

Even more important is the fact that homosexuality was considered to be an extension of idolatry, and therefore a violation of the first table of the Decalogue, worthy of death. The pagan religions of many cultures surrounding Israel included homosexual acts as part of their idolatrous rituals. Sacred cult prostitution of males was prevalent even among the Israelites during times of national apostasy, and as such, was vigorously condemned.[18] With the rejection of the gods of vegetation and procreation, the Jews tended to protect their revelation of the "wholely-Other" God[19] by rejecting their symbols as well, such as those referring to the life of the earth, fertility, and the seed. In so doing, all sexuality subconsciously became the symbol of idolatry, and as a result, was exercised only under rigid, cultic regulations. As has already been mentioned, the existence of cultic prostitution under the surface of Jewish society during the time of the kings aided the identification of illicit sexuality with idolatry, until with Hosea and Ezekiel, sexual metaphors were used as a symbol of all Israel's

unfaithfulness to her marriage covenant with God.[20]

It is essential to realize that lack of procreation and temple cult prostitution are totally insufficient reasons for the repudiation of all homosexual behavior in present-day culture, and certainly an appeal to the primitive, sexist notions of male domination in Hebrew society underlying many of these homosexual prohibitions cannot be used by our accusers without revealing their own inner convictions of male chauvinist sexism. With the burgeoning population explosion and growing world famine, it would be absurd to demand that we take the Genesis injunction to multiply as a timeless precept which God meant to remain applicable for every individual, considering that the earth has already been more than abundantly replenished![21]

We now realize that sexuality serves many higher functions other than reproduction, — the expression of intimate love, affirmation of the worth of the beloved, and the strengthening of the bonds of relationship. Under present circumstances, ethically speaking, the practice of homosexual acts is no worse morally than that of artificial birth control among heterosexuals. Furthermore, to accuse gay Christians of practicing idolatrous abominations is ridiculous. We are not temple prostitutes serving in the cult of a foreign god, for we have one God, our heavenly Parent, and one Lord, Jesus Christ.[22]

The "pick and choose" attitude of fundamentalist Christians towards the Old Testament levitical law is indefensible. Their patchwork handling of the Mosaic Law is neither justifiable nor honest. Evangelicals often take certain passages in the Torah forbidding homosexual activity, and isolate them from the general context of the Law as a whole. However, they cannot use these texts as a current revelation of God's anger against gay people, while they conveniently ignore a host of other Scripture verses which condemn in no uncertain terms many things which are an integral part of their own daily life style.[23] If our fundamentalist opponents seek to pass judgment on us based upon the book of Leviticus, or the Mosaic Law in general, then, in order to be consistent, they must accept the rest of the injunctions contained in the Law of Moses as being morally just and applicable for *all* of us today. Slavery, wars of extermination, death for disobedient children, and provisions for blood revenge are all part of that same Law.[24] The list could go on *ad infinitum*.

Obviously, one would be a fool not to admit that the Old Testament ethic left much to be desired as a workable standard in a modern Christian society. This is not hard to understand once we realize that ancient Israel was a semi-barbaric society struggling to survive in a brutal world where human life was a cheap commodity. Much of what was considered moral in Biblical times, we would consider immoral by today's Christian sense of morality and ethics.[25] It is also important to remember that what was deemed to be an indecent activity or custom in that era due to various cultic regulations, may well be considered moral in most modern cultures where these archaic laws have ceased to have any social significance.

One thing is certain: while the over-all principles of God never change, the means of implementing them in a relevant fashion so as to be understood by society often varies from age to age. An understanding of the eternal significance of Scripture as attaining meaning in the context of culture is feared by evangelicals because it undermines their faith-understanding of the Bible as having a validity outside of human circumstance. This belief stands in ultimate contradiction to the fact that God chose to send the eternal Logos into a specific time and place, allowing Him to be conditioned and defined by the specific culture of first century Judea.[26] Our evangelical accusers often assert that since the Old Testament is all equally inspired, everything purporting to be an utterance from on High we must take seriously. It is not our intention to disregard these pertinent Biblical passages, but preferably to place them in their proper perspective.

Evidence from Scripture reinforces the assertion of many theologians that there is a continual thread of *progressive* revelation in the Bible, standing as a record of spiritual evolution in Israel's apprehension of the Divine Nature.

> *Obviously, any idea of inspiration which implies equal value in the teachings of Scripture, or inerrancy in its statements, or conclusive infallibility in its ideas, is irreconcilable with such facts as this book presents . . . there is no finality about it in the sense that the ideas which the Scriptures opened up were finished when the Scriptures stopped. Neither Judaism nor Christianity, despite their theories, has in practice succeeded in so treating the Book . . . The God of the Bible has proved his quality as "the living God," who has not said his last word on any subject or put the finishing touch on any task. The supreme contribution of the Bible is not that it finished anything but that it started something. Its thinking is not so much a product as a process, issuing from a long precedent process and inaugurating an immeasurably important subsequent development . . . So, the finalities of Scripture are mainly important because they are germinative. They are misinterpreted and misused when employed to stop further development rather than to encourage it.* [27]

Therefore, for Christians to use the Bible as a dam to hold back the torrent of the Holy Spirit's continuous revelation through the various ministries in the Body of Christ concerning contemporary issues of social, political, and ethical importance, amounts to nothing less than grieving the Spirit of God.

Before reflecting upon the attitudes of the New Testament writers, we must not fail to examine the saga of Sodom and Gomorrah. This ancient account of their destruction by God can no longer be used as a blanket condemnation of homosexuality, as has long been assumed. According to some scholars, this story may have no reference whatsoever to sexual sin.[28] The main issue rests upon the interpretation of the Hebrew word translated "know" in Genesis 19:5, where the men of Sodom demand that the two angelic messengers be brought out of Lot's house in order that they might "know" them. This word occurs over 900 times in the Old Testament, and in only a very few instances is it used with any sexual connotations.[29] Certain authors have recently suggested that even if the sexual interpretation of the word is applied, the real sin of Sodom was nevertheless in actuality the breach of hospitality.

> *Since sexual practices were not the concern of the criminal law, there need be no surprise that sodomy is neither prohibited in the Book of the Covenant nor Deuteronomy, in spite of the fact that a story of attempted sodomy is twice used to illustrate utter depravity (Gen. 19, Judg. 19),* though in each case the emphasis falls not on the proposed sexual act per se, but on the terrible violation of the customary law of hospitality. *(Emphasis mine)*[30]

Hospitality to the Oriental and Middle Eastern cultures was a sacred duty demanding protection for those whom God had placed under their roof. It was a relationship considered to be as strong as kinship, sealed as it was by the breaking of bread.[31] It has been pointed out that this breach of hospitality on the part of the men of Sodom was due in all probability to their suspicions that the two messengers staying with Lot may have been spies. It is also interesting to note that nowhere in the Old Testament is homosexuality listed as one of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah.[32] It was not until later Judaism that we find the prevalent, anti-gay interpretation of this story in the writings of Josephus, Philo, and in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. [33] Even with the assumption that these men wanted to abuse the two angels sexually, the incident still becomes merely a condemnation of gross degeneracy and attempted rape. It should be taken into account that *all* the men of Sodom were assembled there to take part in whatever was to occur.[34] The fact remains that only about 4% to 10% of any society is truly homosexual, which would indicated that most of the men in Sodom were actually heterosexuals who would then have been

participating in forms of sexuality which were not natural to them. This was clearly the result of moral decadence, and as such, was righteously abhorred by God, as the conclusion of the story demonstrates.

The only other Biblical passage which has influenced the interpretation of the Sodom story's meaning is the seventh verse from the Epistle of Jude. Unfortunately, many modern Bible versions have contributed toward an erroneous understanding of the verse as being directed against homosexuality by using the phrase "unnatural lusts," as does, for instance, the *New English Bible*:

> *Remember Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring towns, like the angels, they committed fornication and followed unnatural lusts; and they paid the penalty in eternal fire, an example for all to see.*

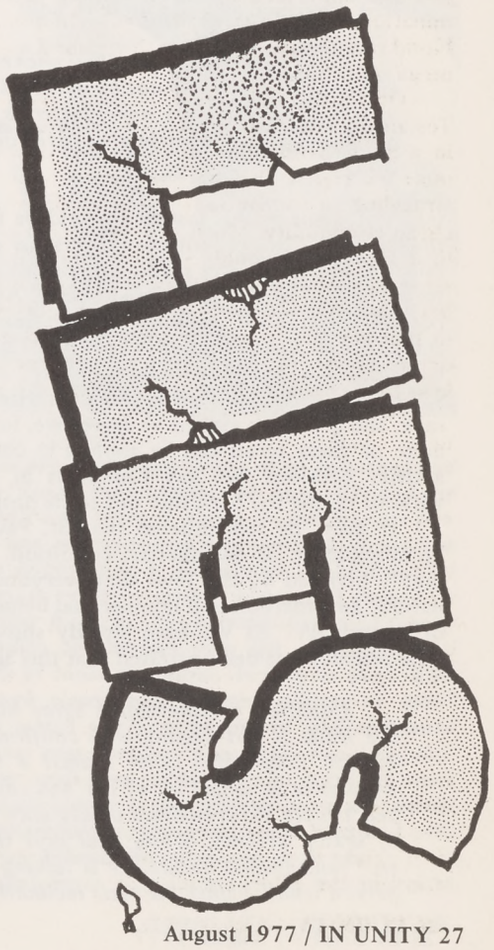
Actually, the *King James Version* comes closer to the meaning of the original Greek by translating " . . . giving themselves over to fornication, and going after *strange flesh* . . . " The hideousness of Sodom and Gomorrah's sin was not so much the *type* of sexual act which the men at Lot's house may have wanted to perform. Instead, the focus of the writer in this epistle is upon the fact that these people were so base and demented as to lust sexually after *angels*, divine beings of a higher created order. This is the thrust of Jude's argument. The "homosexuality" of the incident is not being referred to at all.

Most texts from the New Testament used to denounce the practicing homosexual come from the epistles of St. Paul.

> *. . . That is why such people are without excuse: they knew God and yet refused to honor him as God or to thank him . . . they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for a worthless imitation, for the image of mortal man, of birds, of quadrupeds and reptiles. That is why God left them to their filthy enjoyments and the practices with which they dishonor their own bodies, since they have given up divine truth for a lie and have worshipped and served creatures instead of the creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen! That is why God has abandoned them to degrading passions: why their women have turned from natural intercourse to unnatural practices and why their menfolk have given up natural intercouse to be consumed with passion for each other, men doing shameless things with men and getting an appropriate reward for their perversion.*[35]

It is plain from the foregoing excerpt in the first chapter of the Book of Romans, that Paul was predicating his argument upon the *assumption* that those persons he was describing were, in fact, practicing heterosexuals who, because of their rebellious and idolatrous state, had "given up" sexual relations with their husbands and wives, respectively. To use Romans 1:21-27 as a spiritual sword against homosexuals who are in no way attracted to the opposite sex, much less, involved in sexual congress with them, amounts to stretching the apostle's words into a meaning which goes far beyond their original intent; namely, that acting contrary to one's natural instincts is yet another indication of humanity's fallen and alienated state of confusion. Such a principle can be similarly applied, in light of present psychological knowledge, to the situation of gays in this predominately straight society which seeks to force them into sexual molds and relations which are absolutely contrary to their own nature. For homosexuals to allow themselves to be drawn into such a denial of their own inner sexual instincts out of an idolatrous regard for the orientation of the majority would be to commit the same kind of sinful folly described by Paul in Romans 1 with respect to heterosexuals.

There is no doubt that the Apostle Paul, true to the Mosaic tradition which he had inherited, had a revulsion for the licentious brand of homosexual behavior rampant throughout the great cities of the Roman Empire. To his way of thinking, these homosexual acts were an outward manifestation of the idolatrous nature of the Gentiles, neither did he believe that anyone participating in the promiscuousness with which he was



confronted would inherit the Kingdom of God.

> *The writers of the Epistles were living in the midst of a pagan, sensual Roman world. Every kind of sexual license was known. Cities such as Corinth were "pleasure centers" where everything physical was emphasized. Such a life was hardly consistent with the Gospel of Jesus which, although it did not deny the physical, the pleasurable, the joyous, it did attempt to place "the things of this world" in perspective with "the treasures of heaven."*[36]

While it is fairly certain that St. Paul had his negative opinions concerning homosexual acts, it is essential to realize that the twentieth century believer is not bound by the apostle's private or penned *opinions*, but rather by the basic principles which he gave us that can be relevantly related to the sociological/cultural situation confronting us in this current sexual controversy. It seems apparent from the writings of St. Paul that the idea of homosexual acts as an expression of genuine love between two persons never entered the apostle's mind. Instead, such conduct was always associated with lust and degeneracy, not love.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

> *. . . we may very well say that what the Apostle was driving at was the evil of promiscuous sexuality, prostitution, and a general refusal to accept love as the clue to all genuinely human sexual expression."*[37]

It is also important that we make a special point of the fact that in 1 Corinthians 6:9, St. Paul never used words which expressed condemnation of a gay love relationship (in all probability because he had no understanding or revelation that such a thing could exist). There are words in the Greek which express the meaning of homosexual love or homosexual nature. Such words were not used in this oft-cited passage which many have assumed consigned all gay people to hell:

> *Don't you know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers* nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders *. . . will inherit the kingdom of God.*[38]

Gay Christians in this instance would be the first to agree with the apostle. Male prostitution is just as degrading and just as much a denial of the divine intentions of sexual fulfillment through love as is female prostitution. And all one need do to correctly apply the meaning of "homosexual offender" is to think about the commonly accepted terminology of a criminal who is a "heterosexual offender." An offender of either sexual inclination is a person characterized by child molesting, rape, and generally violent or aggressive, lustful behavior. Hence, none of these terms can be applied in condemnation of sexual activity between two gay Christians in a loving relationship, without taking the Scripture out of its proper context.

It must be remembered that St. Paul had no concept of homosexuality as an inherent condition. Instead, it was commonly believed by the Jews that everyone was heterosexual by nature, and therefore all homosexual behavior was an indication of degeneracy. As we have already shown, current psychological research has demonstrated that this assumption is in error.

> *Qualified commentators agree that, for the most part, the Bible is not dealing with confirmed homosexuals. The biblical judgments came against a background of moral decadence in which all of life had come loose at the seams, and people experimented wildly with just about every form of sexual activity. When Paul says that homosexual behavior runs against nature, he is talking about a heterosexual person who, against his basic inclinations, engages in homosexual activity. The man he is talking about is not, at the core, a homosexual person . . . Why the Bible makes no distinction between heterosexual people who engage in homosexual acts and confirmed homosexual people is easily understood. The confirmed homosexual was not recognized until roughly 1890. The Bible writers assumed that everyone was heterosexual and that in times of moral decay, some heterosexual people did some strange and unnatural things with each other.*[39]

St. Paul considered all homoerotic activity to be unnatural. This idea too, has been shown to be a misconception. "Homosexuality may be a deviation in sexual patterns which is in the normal range, psychologically."[40]

Recent scientific studies have also proven that same-sex relationships occur throughout the created order of higher species.

> *The data on homosexual behavior among infrahuman mammals indicate that it occurs among the lowest as well as among the highest mammals, but that as we ascend the phylogenetic scale both the frequency and the complexity of this behavior increase: among the subhuman primates we get a clear inference of the type of homosexuality that exists at the level of human life . . . On the basis of the phylogenetic data, and on the basis of the cross-cultural data . . . it is not too rash to assume, as West did, that "Homosexual behavior seems to arise from some deep-rooted natural urge which finds different expression in different cultures" . . . No sexual behavior, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or autoerotic in character, is without a firm foundation in phylogeny and developmental history of the species.*[41]

From this we can only conclude that homosexuality is a legitimate, variant form of sexual expression sanctioned by Nature itself. All of this evidence would indicate that 2,000 year-old concepts concerning homosexuality cannot be considered final, flawless, or normative through the passing centuies simply because they seem to be found in the Bible. But if we take issue with the plain assertions of Scripture, or reinterpret them in such a way as to show that some of their applications have been archaic and incorrect, doesn't that mean that we are denying the inspiration of the Bible? Not at all! Divine inspiration is not a guarantee of infallibility. In the words of Anglican Archbishop William Temple, "the message (of the Bible) is . . .so inextricably human and divine in one, that no single sentence can be quoted as having the authority of an authentic utterance of the All-Holy God."[42]

In the writings of the Bible, and the New Testament especially, we have received as handed down to us a record of the basic truths and principles of Christian faith as understood and practiced *at that point in history*. It is highly doubtful whether the Apostle Paul had any idea that his letters would be preserved for almost 2,000 years, and treated as an extension of Holy Scripture. Many of the epistles which were written dealt with specific situations as they occurred in the various local churches throughout Asia Minor and the rest of the Roman Empire. But it was the will of God, as history attests, to keep these writings for later generations, for within them are contained the witness of prophets, apostles, and martyrs, to the reality of the Christ-event.

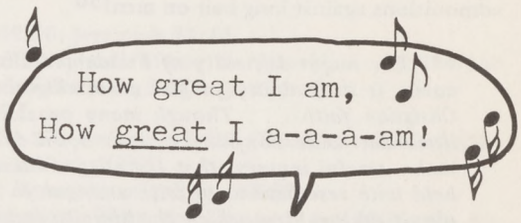
The problem today with so many Christians centers around their insistence that the Bible is the *supreme* authority on all matters of any spiritual or moral consequence. This, however, was not the case in the early Christian community. To be sure, the Scriptures were valued highly as being "profitable" for spiritual growth and teaching, but the Supreme Head over the Church was, and is, Jesus Christ Himself, manifesting His authoritative guidance by the Holy Spirit through the foundational and teaching ministries which have arisen within the Church Universal in every generation.[43] The bond of unity and

faithfulness to Christ is kept constant through the recognition of the presence of God's Spirit at work in the Body of Christ; the Spirit Who can no more be constrained than can the wind.[44]

Keeping this in mind, it would do well for us to see how the Apostle Paul admonished the churches to interpret the inspired Word of God coming through the agency of persons speaking under the anointing of the gift of prophecy in the local assemblies: "Do not stifle inspiration, and do not despise prophetic utterances,*but bring them all to the test, and then keep what is good in them and avoid the bad of whatever kind.*"[45] In this passage, St. Paul has given us a key to the interpretation of the entire body of Scripture, for as prophetic utterance is the inspired speaking through a human channel, so also is the Bible a collection of inspired writings brought forth through human instrumentality. In either case, we are told to bring everything to the test, accepting the obviously inspired portions, while at the same time rejecting any judgmental errors or archaic social attitudes which may not be consistent with our present understanding of the Christian gospel. This is the only way we can "accurately handle the word of truth,"[46] and it can only be done with the aid of the Holy Spirit within us, the Anointing which teaches us all things, for the Spirit is the One Who is to lead us into all the truth.[47] This is why exception should be taken to the fundamentalist battle-cry, "The Bible *is* the Word of God!" (without any qualification). On the other hand, insistence should be made that the Bible *contains* the Word of God. There is a vast difference.

> *The Bible is not the Word of God, but the words of men, in which and through which we believe the living, active, constantly contemporary Word of God comes to men . . . A Bible passage is to be interpreted in terms of the experiences, life setting and problems of the specific writer and with respect to the purposes for which it was written . . . A passage is to be further explicated in the light of our contemporary experience and knowledge. We must try to see it in relation to our social-psychological-historical-philosophical understanding as well as to our existential knowledge . . . Although the Bible writers faced the same basic existential questions we face, many of their answers are time-caught, as ours are, and valid only for them. But the values they affirmed by their answers are of significance to us . . . The whole Bible is to be seen in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the experience of the early Church.*[48]

Unfortunately, Biblical fundamentalism has become a spiritual fetish among too many evangelicals. Coined by one Christian writer as "the leaven of the Pharisees" against which Jesus warned His disciples, literalism has more often than not been the last stronghold for racial prejudice, and various sociological superstitions; an open refuge for the last vestiges of theological parochialism which should have disapperaed with the passing of the Dark Ages.



> *The Bible has profound significance as an historical and literary record of God's interaction with humanity and the revelation of God's will. When it is used to substantiate personal prejudices and self-righteous judgments, as it often is by literalists, its importance is diminished . . . A belief in biblical literalism is symptomatic of a person's failure or inability to exercise free will. The literalist betrays a fear of taking responsibility for her/his own life, decisions, and the consequences of those decisions. As long as there is an "absolute" (though clearly contradictory) listing of "dos" and "don'ts" to which one can profess to give allegiance (though no one has ever completely succeeded in doing so), one need not use one's own intelligence or manifest one's own faith. Blind allegiance to the biblical word is a denial of personal responsibility in relationship with God and with neighbor. Therefore biblical literalism can in fact be declared to be idolatrous . . . Literalism is antithetical to*

the responsible life to which Jesus the Christ called his followers. It is also a denial of the continuing revelation of the Holy Spirit . . . Those who use certain . . . passages from Paul's epistles as proof that God condemns Gay people are selective literalists. Their irresponsible use of Paul's writings gives evidence to their inability to cope with the reality of Gay love and Gay people and perhaps more often their inability to cope with sexuality and/or their own Gay feelings. Their homophobia, not their faith, is revealed.[49]

Anti-gay evangelicals, despite their denials to the contrary, are characterized by theological inconsistency. It is rather amusing to see many young, long-haired preachers in today's Jesus Movement judging gay people because they consider us to be violating St. Paul's injunctions against homosexual acts, whilc at the same time they stand guilty of ignoring the apostle's admonitions against long hair on men![50]

The major difficulty of Fundamentalism, by whatever name, is its inability to give an intelligible account of the Christian faith . . . Though many proclaim their Biblical literalism with confidence, it is soon evident, when we make careful inquiry, that the alleged literalism is actually held with reservations or with ambiguity . . . A good example of the problem which the literalist faces is that presented by the words of the Apostle Paul when he is definite on a number of subjects, such as the superiority of the unmarried state (1 Cor. 7:7), and the subordination of women. How many are there, in fact, who accept without qualifications the assertion that, if there is anything women desire to know, "let them ask their husbands at home" (1 Cor. 14:35)? If the literalist dismisses this unambiguous imperative by saying that it applied only to a particular situation, where there was a special problem of overtalkative women, he has already undermined his own general position. Much as we may admire the sincere devotion and sacrificial giving of many persons in the Fundamentalist camp, we must conclude that theirs is not a live option in the contemporary world.[51]

CONCLUSION

God is once again unfolding the divine purpose in our day, leading us into newer depths of insight. The Lord has always worked through the medium of progressive revelation. It was the prophets who expanded the truths contained in the Law of Moses. It was Christ Who magnified the inner meaning of the prophets. It was St. Paul and the other apostles who developed more fully the interpretation of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God has not finished yet!

The Lord is bringing us into a new understanding of our sexuality and the inclusiveness of Christ's love for us as gay people. This is the increasing witness of God's Divine Spirit stirring within our own spirits. Nor is it without Biblical precedent, for in the Mosaic law eunuchs were forbidden entrance into the Assembly of Israel because they were considered physically blemished.[52] Centuries later, through the inspiration of the prophet Isaiah, it was made clear that the physical characteristics of a person were no longer the issue, but rather the spiritual condition of a humble heart before God.[53] As a result, eunuchs were promised a place of honor in the very Presence of the Lord.[54] Yet the conditional promise of blessings for the faithful eunuchs is the same for those of use today who have found that in a unique sexual sense, because of our gay orientation, we, too, have "been eunuchs from our mother's womb."[55] The one and only requirement that we are called upon by God to fulfill, is that we do what is pleasing to the divine Will as revealed to us through the living Word communicated by the Spirit.[56]

However, as Christians, we must beware of the subtle deception which would cause us to believe that since our gayness is accepted by the Lord, so also is the promiscuous life style so common in certain segments of the gay community:

You spent quite long enough in the past living the sort of life that pagans live, behaving indecently, giving way to your passions, drinking all the time, having wild parties and drunken orgies and degrading yourselves . . . So people cannot understand why you no longer hurry off with them to join this flood which is rushing down to ruin . . . [57]

Unfortunately, this is an all too apt description of some individuals in the secular, gay world. If our encounter with Jesus Christ has had no significant effect upon our life style, then we should reeaxamine our spiritual walk with God. The Scripture warns that without a holy life no person shall ultimately see the Lord, or be accepted into God's Holy Presence.[58] Our relationships must be built upon true love, and the Christian virtues which would make such unions an honor to the Name of Christ.

We no longer have . . . sufficient theological grounds for perpetuating a destructive attitude. This does not mean that some homosexuals are not unhealthy, unchristian, and sinful. It simply means that homosexuality can exist in healthy, Christian, and graced forms . . . There are different ways of being homosexual and different ways of being heterosexual. Christian understanding praises relationships seen in the context of love, fidelity, permanence, and living in Christ through the Spirit.[59]

If we are intent on having sex only for sex's sake, merely using people in the process, then we are no better than the unbelievers, and our portion will be with the hypocrites. When our Christianity has no effect upon the quality and type of sexual relationships we cultivate, our outreach to others will be minimal. We were given our sexuality by God to enhance our ability for spiritual service, and to fit us for the unique role given us in the redemptive plan of the ages. If we fail to be good stewards of the gift the Lord has given us, how can we possibly think that we shall accomplish our divine destiny? We have been sent by Christ to be the visible symbols of His life at work in the world, but if Christ is all but invisible within us, we can only evolve into vessels of dishonor in the Household of God. If our moral approach to personal values is no different from those we seek to convert, the unbeliever will see no valid reason for leading a life based upon the higher moral principles of the Christian faith. In essence, we must practice what we preach.

When all is said and done, we are left with the overwhelming conviction that the accusations raised by the more conservative, fundamentlist churches against the practice of homosexuality, are simply "paper tigers."

I believe with equal conviction that unless you and others who desire to cling to this banner of homosexuality, repent before God Himself and turn from your wickedness, you'll die and go to a devil's hell. In the love of God, I beseech you . . . and those whom you call brethren, that you come kneeling before Calvary's Cross and die to your own or the devil's brand of Christianity. You will never satisfy Deity by patting yourselves on the back and assuring one another that its all right to be "gay." There is only one spirit who will encourage your quest of homosexuality's justification, and his name is satan."[60]

Self-righteous tirades, as exemplified by the above quotation, may sound threatening, loaded as they are with generous portions of hell-fire and brimstone, but under close examination, contain nothing of any substantial validity within the realm of responsible theology. So what should be our conclusion?

You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free . . . For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery . . . [61]

The yoke of bondage which has been imposed on so many

of our gay sisters and brothers by the churchly establishment, cannot continue to be tolerated. The freedom of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has liberated us from the lonely despair which characterized our lives as the rejects of prejudiced churches. "Those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chose – those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything."[62]

The Lord always seems to choose the despised ones to carry the Good News of liberation. We may be put down and criticized, but we cannot allow that to influence us, for we have a message to proclaim to our community – "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."[63] Therefore, let us go forward to do the will of the Lord with confidence and a clear conscience, for we have received the assurance of God's acceptance.

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Fellowship In Unity

News of the Worldwide Fellowship Family

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

A letter from Exhorter Renee Hein tells about her thoughts in Adelaide:

You cannot imagine how I read and re-read the copy of IN UNITY that came the other day, after waiting so long. You cannot imagine how it feels to me to be able, at least on paper, to renew old acquaintances and be thrilled by the progress of new churches and the growth of older ones.

I had almost come to the stage where I felt MCC here was national. But, thank God, no, we are all still alive and well, as well as being vitally interested in the rest of the Fellowship.

I myself am looking forward to General Conference '77 and cannot wait to arrive there.

MCC Adelaide has been doing well under the guidance of our new pastors, Rev. Margaret Breckenridge and Rev. Ellen Watson, who were installed as our pastors in May. We are attempting differing forms of worship, all with great acceptance and our attendance now is regularly between 40 and 50.

There is a new witness of the Gospel in this church and God is bringing people in who need and want to hear the Gospel and accept Christ. There is a new spirit stirring the people and I'm sure we will see God begin to work more and more in the lives of the people here. Almost one fourth of the congregation are Trans people and a number of these are fully involved in church work, and finding a new dedication through Christ. I believe that God does move when over half the congregation arrive for Bible study. Surely God is good.

WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION

Africa, Australia, South Africa, Europe, Canada. Rev. Elder Freda Smith, Secretary of World Church Extension, reports growth everywhere.

The Rev. Sylvanua O. Maduka, an ordained minister of the Universal Fellowship, Pastor of MCC Zaria in the middle of Africa, has entrusted more and more of the work of the local church, which averages 75 in attendance on Sunday and 25 in midweek, to his Exhorter. He himself travels more and more to the other side of that nation to begin a work among people there who have called for his ministry. After years of walking ten miles each way from his home to his church in Zaria, he finds it not even that easy to carry the ministry of MCC hundreds of miles to the east without the van he's been praying for.

The Rev. Bob Wolfe, Coordinator of Church Extension in Canada, reports that three new Canadian cities are beginning MCC congregations. He himself, with his spouse, the Rev. Larry Gauer, has begun a work in Vancouver. MCC has grown in Canada to the point where the congregagations of Canada have petitioned the Board of Elders that Canada be named a District, as Australasia was almost two years ago.

The Rev. Lee J. Carlton has been in contact with numerous interested persons in various cities of the continent of Europe. Some of these are people who have lived in the United States and have been members of MCC congregations in that nation. In lieu of a trip to General Conference, Rev. Carlton will visit a number of cities from Amsterdam to Madrid and accept an invitation to preach in Paris.

South Africa continues to be "martyr country," where gay Christians meet, not merely with the closet fears of many brothers and sisters elsewhere, but where they meet in almost mortal dread of *dire* consequences, arrest and imprisonment, just for *being* homosexual.

TORONTO, CANADA

The Reverend John Ayers, newly elected pastor of MCC Toronto, began his incumbency in the pulpit on April 3.

Reverend Ayers was called, following a congregational meeting held on February 20, 1977, to fill the pulpit left vacant when Rev. Bob Wolfe left, along with his life-mate, Rev. Larry Gauer, to establish MCC-Vancouver.

The 43-year-old Reverend Ayers was reared in the midwestern United States and is a graduate of Stanford University in California. He has also attended the University of Indiana School of Law at Indianapolis, the Episcopal Theological Seminary at Austin, Texas, and the Episcopal Counselling Center at Tampa.

Licensed to the ministry in the Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in August of 1976, he was a member of the ministerial staff of MCC-Tampa, and worked on visitation, counselling and prison ministry. He has been a member of the Commission on Faith, Fellowship, and Order, and has been chairperson of the Southeast District division of that commission.

OTTAWA, CANADA

The MCC congregation in the National Capitol Region was recognized on April 24 as a chartered – or full – church of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in a service conducted by the Reverend Elder Nancy Wilson of Detroit.

The congregation, founded in September, 1974, by the Reverend Philip Speranza, a former presbyter of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, met just prior to the chartering service to elect an official Board of Directors to govern the temporal affairs of the church, and elected Rev. Speranza as Pastor, or spiritual leader.

AUSTRALASIAN DISTRICT CLERGY CONFERENCE – APRIL 1977

We all learnt a lot at the District Ministers' Conference, held in Brisbane over the Anzac Weekend, but one lesson was taught in the best possible way – that is by example. The lesson was humility.

As District Co-ordinator, Rev. Jan Weymouth had every right to take center stage for the proceedings, but typically she was more often to be found sitting on the floor in a corner, listening quietly. Her hand and personality did guide the conference, but in such a beautifully humble way that my love and admiration for her grew that little bit more. The story of our Lord came to mind; where he tells of a wedding guest who, after taking a lesser seat, is brought forward by the host to a more important position at the feast. (Luke 14:7-11)

Most of the workshops were conducted by the lay and trainee ministers (i.e. deacons and exhorters) on the theme of the Seminar which was THE LIFE OF HOLINESS. We were addressed by Rev. Ray Hunt of the Albert St. Methodist Church – he spoke on holiness and then chatted about the everyday life of a very busy mid-city Pastor.

A session on the By-laws was informative and here are just two proposals for changes in the By-laws, that will be put to General Conference in Denver, Colorado in August this year:

1. The word EXHORTER be changed to TRAINEE MINISTER.

2. That Study Groups be allowed a vote at District Conferences.

Sydney Pastor, the Rev. Ron Burcham, preached to a packed Quaker Hall for the Sunday night service and on Monday we did a cooks tour of Brisbane by bus. It really is growing into a beautiful city.

The conference was a success in many ways, not least of all in the renewing of old friendships and the making of new ones. Our sincere thanks to MCC Brisbane for their generous hospitality.

by George Oakley, Sydney MCC Deacon,
in *Awareness*, MCC Sydney

AUSTRALIA

A letter from Norm Thoday, Worship Coordinator of MCC Gold Coast at Mermaid Beach, Australia, brings us up to date on Who's Who in the Australian Delegation to the Denver General Conference.

"In reply to your letter dated 1st June 1977, it seems that our delegation has grown to five since I first wrote to you.

Enclosed are briefs on all five delegates together with photos of Ms. Renee Hein and myself.

I regret the delay in answering your letter but the District Coordinator has been away in New Zealand on an official visit.

She tells me that prospects are very bright for our work in N.Z. as several centres are conducting feasibility studies at the present time. This, with the news of a second work in Nigeria, and a new work in Spain should make for good reading in the next issue of "In Unity."

PROFILE ON PERSONS ATTENDING GENERAL CONFERENCE FROM AUSTRALIA.

Ms. Carol O'Keefe
Charter member of Church in Adelaide, South Australia.
Currently worshipping with congregation of Brisbane Mission, Qld.
Double certificated Nursing Sister.
Attending Queensland University full time, stufying for a Bachelor of Arts degree.
Licensed as an Exhorter through the Adelaide Church.

Mr. Don Treble
Worshipping regularly with the congregation of the Brisbane mission.
Employed by the Brisbane City Council (one of the largest local government areas in Australia) as their Public Relations Officer.
Was instrumental in forming a gay branch of Alcoholics Anonymous in Brisbane. There are now two meetings of this group per week.
Spends a large amount of his time writing novels and uses this as an avenue of working for God.

Rev. Jan Weymouth
Interim Pastor of the Brisbane mission.
Currently District Coordinator for the District of Australasia.
Spouse of Carol O'Keefe.

Renee Hein is an Exhorter with MCC adelaide, and a graduate of Crusade Bible College. She is currently studying part-time at Parkin/Wesley Theological College.

Renee Hein

Norm Thoday

Renee is co-founder of "TRANSCARE," a group that provides practical, welfare, and spiritual help to Trans-persons, in conjunction with psychiatric and medical assessment.

In everyday life she is a personnel officer, working with the Australian Government's Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 1975, Renee won the right to cross-dress at work and remain a Permanent Officer in the Public Service, without loss of salary or status.

Norm Thoday is Worship coordinator for the sStudy Group, MCC Gold Coast, and in addition is an Exhorter from MCC Sydney.

He was for twenty-two years actively associated with the Central City, Albert Street Methodist Church in Brisbane and was a member of the lay ministry panel with that church assisting the Superintendent Minister with visitation and pastoral care in his neighborhood, as well as supervising youth groups and men's society activities within the church.

Norm is now retired, but for 42 years was an employee of Mobil Oil Corporation, and now devotes himself full time – ex gratia – to the spiritual needs of fellow gay people on the Gold Coast, a tourist city of almost 100,000 people in South East Queensland.

SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

In the latter part of May, Tulsa, OK hosted the South-Central District Conference.

MCC Fayetteville, AR described the meeting in their newsletter, "The Ozark Son-Rise":

> "May 19-21 in Tulsa was a spiritual uplift for sixteen MCC of the Ozarks people who attended and worshipped with brothers and sisters from throughout the district. Our sister church in Tulsa is to be commended for its spirit of love and hospitality. In district business matters; the early resignation of District Coordinator Rev. Shawn C. Farrell, MCC Dallas brought about the election of a new district coordinator, Rev. Jeri Harvey, MCC of the Resurrection in Houston. Anyone wishing to contact the new coordinator may do so by writing: 1214 Joe Annie, P. O. Box 13731, Houston, TX 77019."

NORTHEAST DISTRICT GETS INTO HEAVY THINKING
(Report on Spring District Conference – May 20-22, 1977)

Growth was the message of the MCC Northeast District Conference in Brooklyn, New York. We are growing by leaps and boundaries! Richmond, Virginia has called to its pulpit our district's own Roy Birchard and subsequently elected to "secede" from the South to join us in the Northeast. Howard Gaas, district coordinator, pointed out that the Fellowship has estimated there are at least 100 towns and cities in the United States that could presently sustain an MCC and that many of these are areas within the Northeast.

We are planning new churches in Pennsylvania, New York, Long Island and Maine. He predicted the time would soon come when we would have to divide into two or three smaller districts. To facilitate accessibility to our district leadership at the present time, Shelley Hamilton of Philadelphia was elected assistant district coordinator.

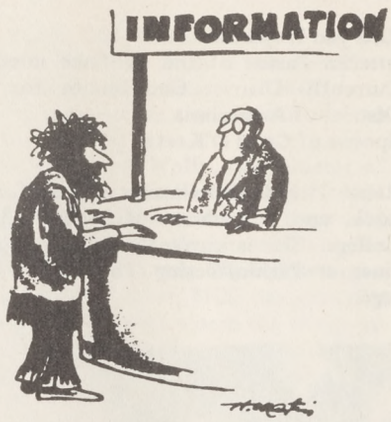
Boston's own Margaret Hougen and Marge Ragona played key roles in the conference, itself. Margaret delivered the sermon at Saturday night worship, a moving message about patience. Saturday morning, Marge delivered a hilarious and scholarly keynote address on "Women and the Bible" which earned her a standing ovation. Marge was also unanimously approved by the credentials committee that weekend and Margaret was recognized officially as the worship coordinator of our neighboring mission in Worcester. Congratulations to Margaret and Marge, those achievements that weekend marked our own growth in Boston!

The Fellowship itself, being one of the fastest growing deniminations in the country, is also experiencing the pains of growth, the conflict and challenge of inevitable change. Change calls for cohesion, and cohesion calls for structure. But what will our structure be? Will we turn to a system of hierarchy such as in the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Churches, or will we be a series of autonomous congregations as the Quakers? Or will we be imaginative and *invent* a church policy that suits our needs? These are immensely important questions our young church has yet to answer. UFMCC has formed a commission, "Government, Structures and Systems," charged with formulating these answers. It is a unique and exciting responsibility.

Jay Deacon and myself, this district's representatives to the Commission, conducted a workshop in Brooklyn to educate our people as to how immediate the mission of GSS is. A motion defeated in the business meeting illustrated the point. The district coordinator suggested that four assistant coordinators be appointed subordinate to himself. Significantly, the feeling of the law delegates in particular was that this created "bureaucracy," distance between people, and government. If one reads "bishops" for the four "assistant coordinators" and "archbishop" for "coordinator" (of the "Northeast Diocese," to carry the analogy further) one sees immediately the scope of the commission's responsibilities and the immense task ahead of us.

GSS will have to decide the structure of districts, laity, many aspects of the Fellowship itself. We do not want to make recommendations to UFMCC as a clique. The Commission on Government, Structures and Systems is a wide-open body intent on tapping the people of MCC. It is studying how structure encourages and discourages the participation of people and so, in the same way, it is reaching out to its people. There was good feedback given at the workshop in Brooklyn. We plan to move this exciting venture into the individual churches so that we all participate in the growth of MCC.

from *The Way*,
Boston, MCC Newsletter



"Who am I and where am I going and what time will I get there?"

NORTHWEST DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Nearly 150 MCC ministers, delegates and members from the district gathered in Eugene for an extended weekend of fellowship, business meetings, workshops, services and just plain renewing old friendships with our sisters and brothers. Representatives from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California and Utah were there.

Thursday and Friday the credentials committee interviewed 23 ministers and ministerial candidates for relicensing and licensing. Jackie Harris from San Jose and Bob Waldrod formerly from San Jose and now heading the MCC group in Salt Lake City, Utah were among those candidates who were accepted for licensing in the UFMCC.

Rev. Wallace Lanchester of Seattle, this year's district coordinator, conducted the meetings. As your delegate I attended the business meetings where a variety of old and new issues were discussed and voted on. Here are some of the results: Hawaii, formerly in the Southwest District requested that it be a member of the Northwest District, request accepted. Aloha Hawaii MCC.

After presentation of treasurers report and budget, it was decided that the prison ministry allowance was inadequate and re-shuffling of the budget could come near providing the needed funds for this extremely necessary and successful ministry. So,i it was voted that each local church would take up a special collection from their congregation to augment these expenses.

It was unanimously decided that a lay delegate to the Board of Elders of UFMCC was needed to assure open communication between the membership-at-large and that inner sanctum of respectability known as the Board of Elders. Herm Manke was elected as delegate and Sally Bruck the Alternate. Rev. Stan Roberts was elected as the minsiterial liason to that board.

In the By-laws workshop conducted by Herm Manke, a list of 29 proposed By-law amendments was discussed. These will be presented at the General Conference in Denver.

In regards to the N. W. District Christian Women's Conference, Rev. Jane Taylor presented the proposal that each local church would tithe a minimum of $5 monthly to that ministry. Proposal was accepted and passed. START PLANNING NOW Women of MCC for next April's conference.

The conference was a rewarding experience for all in attendance. New ideas as well as new friendships were formed. We spent an uplifting 4 days in the delightfully quaint town of Eugene and returned to our local churches renewed and determined to carry on the Lord's work in our individual and corporate ministries. I'm looking forward to General Conference in August and am proud to represent MCC San Jose.

By Mary Lou Kerchner
(from *The Covenant*, Newsletter of MCC San Jose, July 1977.)

SOUTH-ATLANTIC DISTRICT

As a new district in the fellowship, we had to direct most of our conference energies toward building our district base. However, there was also a great deal of fun and spiritual sharing that went along with the hard work. It was a blessing to see what the Columbia group had accomplished in planning for this gathering, and the hard work and faith that helped them through the conference was a tribute to what MCC can accomplish everywhere.

The conference business meeting centered around the need to get lay and clerical representatives from the district elected to the UFMCC Commission on Church and Government Structures, and to the Advisory Board of the Finance Commission. The elected delegates to the Commission on Church Government Structures are Willie White from Raleigh (clergy delegate) and Steve Laird from Augusta (lay delegate). Elected to the Advisory Board of the Finance Commission were Randall Hill from Knoxville (clergy delegate) and Barbara Weaver from Atlanta (lay delegate).

The conference was held in Columbia, South Carolina on May 28th and 29th, 1977.

The growth of the South Atlantic District has been very encouraging. Since the last district conference, Knoxville, Tennessee has been made a study group

under the direction of Randall Hill (formerly of Nashville) and the Rev. Jim Hill has taken over the pulpits of Augusta and Columbia jointly. All groups in the district now have ministers or worship coordinators.

With the addition of Knoxville, there are now eight groups in the district. Considering that less than seven months ago, there were only six groups, the growth in this short period of time has been phenomenal. We have a great deal to be thankful for, and with other cities like Chattanooga, Macon, Savannah, Columbus, Charleston, and Charlotte all waiting to be tapped, we have a good base of evangelism.

TUCSON, AZ

Attendance has grown and fellowship has flourished in Tucson as Ms. Buff Fisher has ministered to that congregation in the heat of Arizona's desert.

The church is a member of the Tucson Ecumenical Council and Ms. Fisher has continued to conduct counseling, Bible Study, hospital visitation, bar ministry, Holy Union counseling, and attend meetings with other community organizations.

Ms. Fisher was hospitalized for major surgery on June 15 and returned to the pulpit on June 26. Buff and Fred Patterson, Worship Coordinator for the Phoenix congregation, meet half way between the two cities each month for prayer and mutual upbuilding.

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA

Members of the congregation joined various gay groups in the city for a July 4th picnic in the park. An anniversary barbeque was planned for July 9th.

Rev. Roderick continues to minister to the three congregations in the area, MCC San Luis Obispo, Atascardero State Hospital, and the men's state prison and San Luis Obispo. She spoke several times recently at area colleges and serves on the advisory committee for the city of San Luis Obispo.

NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA

With a regular Sunday attendance averaging nearly 200, an active Christian education program, and a dynamic social activities program, it was not surprising to see nearly the entire congregation marching proudly down Hollywood Boulevard on June 26th solidly behind their pastor, Rev. Randy Cyhperd, in the annual Christopher Street West Gay Pride Parade. Their contingent followed the Fellowship section of the parade led by Rev. Perry and his lover, Chip Garcia.

SAN BERNARDINO, CA

Rev. Debbie Gendron, pastor of Trinity MCC, recently was graduated with a B.A. Degree in Religious Studies, completing a four-year program which began before her election as pastor.

A picnic will precede the dedication of their new church home in San Bernardino on Saturday July 23. Attendance continues to average more than 40 each Sunday. The MCC Pomona Choir, under direction of Terry Whitesell and with Bill Pierson as president, will sing for the dedication ceremony, along with the San Diego Choir, directed by Frank Williams.

SACRAMENTO, CA

Rev. Elder Freda Smith, Pastor of the church which has an average Sunday attendance of 150 women and men, has a busy schedule of counseling, Bible classes, hospital and nursing home visitation, Holy Unions, and regular Sunday and mid-week services.

In addition, Rev. Freda testifies at FCC hearing in Sacramento on next year's programming and a meeting of newscasters with community leaders. She attended hearings in the State Assembly on the gay marriage bill and testified at hearings on the fair employment bill and on the death penalty bill and conducted two letter writing parties.

POMONA, CA

MCC Pomona, which grew and became a chartered church under the pastorate of Rev. Robert Sirico for more than a year, continues to meet new challenges. A large percentage of the membership participated in a highly successful booth at the Christopher Street West Carnival in Hollywood for Gay Pride Week 1977 in which they netted more than $1500.00 for their church. Bill Pierson planned and directed the frying and selling of hundreds of "hamburgers, hamburgers, hamburgers . . . "

Rev. Richard Mickley, Director of publications for the Universal Fellowship, was named Interim Pastor on July 1st, following the resignation of Rev. Sirico. The board immediately began the process for setting up a pulpit committee and procedure for selecting a new pastor for the 43-member church, 34 miles from Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES, CA

Father Malcolm Boyd, author of a new book, *Am I Running With You, God?* preached for the evening service on July 3rd attended by more than 300 people.

The dynamic speaker left no doubt that he was running with God and was championing the right of all gay people to do so.

"The Church can't ask people who are gay — who were made in God's image — to lie or be phony just because of the church — who's business it isn't to make people lie or to make people phone, but to love and heal."

SAN DIEGO, CA

MCC San Diego celebrated its 7th anniversary in San Diego with a weekend long spiritual renewal and celebration June 17, 18 and 19th. The opening service was conducted by the Reverend Randy Cypherd, pastor of Metropolitan Community Church in North Hollywood. Fellowship and celebration continued on Saturday with a repeat of last year's ox roast which proved so popular with MCC members and friends. Saturday night at 8 PM Reverend Don Pederson who pastors the church in Los Angeles delivered the message. He brought with him the well-known chancel choir whose members prepared a special program for the occasion.

On Sunday morning at 10:45 AM Reverend Valerie Valrejean led the worship service. Sunday evening at 7:30 PM a special anniversary service began with a program of sacred music prepared for the occasion by the Joyful Noise choir. Worship and thanksgiving was led by San Diego's pastor, the Reverend David Farrell, whose ministry through the fellowship to the homophile community has endeared him to San Diegans. Metropolitan Community Church of San Diego's 7th anniversary was an auspicious beginning for San Diego's participation in National Gay Pride Week which culminated in a parade and rally held in Balboa Park on Sunday, June 26th at 2 PM.

Reverend David was a speaker at the rally which stressed gay pride, gay unity, and human rights for all people.

The impact of MCC San Diego on the community at large was demonstrated in the overflow attendance at the June 19th worship service. Among those in attendance was the city council person for that district, a member of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, and State Assemblyperson, Peter Chacon. Assemblyman Chacon, previously opposed to gay rights bills in the California State Assembly, announced after the worship service at MCC San Diego, that he would not only vote for an anti-discrimination bill, but that he would become a co-sponsor of Assembly Bill 1302, covering sexual preference and sexual orientation.

As IN UNITY goes to press, Rev. David and members of the San Diego gay community were presenting on July 19th a resolution to the San Diego City Council similar to the one repealed in Dade County, FL.

Coalition for Human Rights has been formed in San Diego consisting of gay and straight groups in that city who are interested in human rights for all people. MCC Pastor David Farrell has been elected chairperson of that new organization.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF WASHINGTON D.C. ELECTS PASTOR

On the 5th of June at a specially called congregational meeting the members of the Metropolitan Community Church of Washington D C elected The Rev. Larry J. Uhrig to be their pastor. Rev. Uhrig was elected with 79.5% of the votes cast. This event brought to a conclusion a five month process of pastoral search by a very hard working and dedicated pulpit committee.

The members and friends of MCCDC celebrated the installation of their new pastor on Sunday June 26, 1977, an event marked by much joy and enhanced by the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism and the reception of five new members.

The congregation of Washington DC wish to share their joy with their brothers and sisters throughout the Fellowship and express their deep conviction that the years ahead shall be filled with an abundant outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Washington has in recent months experienced a great moving and leading of the spirit, and awaits an even more profound movement of that same Holy Spirit which has for so long guided the life of the people of God in this city.

Perhaps the vision of the congregation of God's people in Washington DC can best be expressed by the following statement contained in the bulletin of the service of installation on June 26.

"In our communal act of worship this day, in the meetings, deliberations, social events, and educational endeavors of this congregation, let us clearly and consistently proclaim our mission to give to God Creator, the Lord Christ Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit unending praise, glory, and blessings.

"That we are here in this city of Washington DC to stand firm in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in doing that it is our intention to touch personally the lives of people, to address directly issues of injustice, and oppression, to offer boldly the Power of God and the Promise of God's Word to all persons. We are here to claim God's calling to us as a Holy People, to seek to be righteous, to be the outpouring of God's Love to our community.

Everyone who comes to us blesses and enriches our life and ministry. We are filled with joy that each worshipper today has chosen to share with us. Accept our deep gratitude and thanksgiving for your presence."

DENVER, CO

MCC Denver is ready to host the biggest General Conference yet. With an average Sunday attendance of 100, they have invited all to attend their Sunday services on July 31 prior to the start of General Conference. Rev. Elder Hose is preaching for the morning service at 9:00 AM and Rev. Elder Perry is preaching for the 6:40 evening service. MCC Denver choir will sing the lengthy cantata "Jesus is Coming" at the evening service.

MCC Denver is planning to make sure there will be adequate child care during the 1977 General Conference. Last year in Washington, DC, the Denver delegation observed very closely, knowing it would all be up to them this year. "Since MCC prides itself on embracing all people," said one spokesperson, "we need to make sure lesbian mothers, gay fathers and straight parents can also feel not only welcome but that there is adequate arrangements for their children during this conference."

HARTFORD, CT

From the lengthy annual report of an active and involved church, the following paragraphs, written by Pastor Jay Deacon, are chosen.

The Gay Switchboard began as a separate listing in the phonebook for MCC's phone line in 1975. It is now combined with MCC'S main 522-5575 line, a Totalphone service which allows us to handle two lines at once, set up conference calls, and transfer calls to Switchboard volunteers' homes when necessary. Referral information on professional services to the gay community (physicians, lawyers, clinics, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, etc.), organizations and religious organizations, bars and entertainment, and events is available, as well as referrals to the Counseling Service and, sometimes, crisis "hotline" counseling and someone with whom the caller may rap. Record-keeping has been a problem, but our logs show for last month, May (a typical month), 109 calls besides crank and harassment calls. The Switchboard has served as a first, safe, anonymous place to talk to someone for many just beginning the "coming out" process. It is announced regularly on WHCN and WWYZ, and is listed in the white pages of the Hartford, Springfield, New Haven, Waterbury, Manchester, New Britain, Middletown, and Meriden and Enfield phone books. Since some of these listings are new and the books have not yet appeared, we expect our Switchboard to become proportionately busier. We are listed for referral purposes with the statewide Info Line and with other social service organizations.

What sort of year has it been? One of growth and consolidation, one of spiritual deepening, one of intensified community. Our congregation appears to have risen to the almost overwhelming challenge resulting when a significant block of dedicated leadership people moved away all at once: Lee and Alan to Atlanta; Frank and Dave to Fremont, California; and Nancy and Barbara to Englewood and New York City. We wondered seriously whether or not we could survive.

We have not only survived, we have significantly grown. The loving efforts and dedication of so many of you have seen us through that crisis, and we have seen a good number of new folks become involved with our community, too. Trips away from Hartford prove for me the vitality of MCC's faith community and the closeness of our church family: I can never seem to wait to get back! For many, it is worth a long drive to enjoy and celebrate the Presence that is bigger than any of us alone, that fills our community with love and hope and human concern,and whose liberating purpose is made clearer with every passing week. The liberating, humanizing Spirit of Christ is present in our midst, and we are learning to recognize his/her presence in each other.

Because of that, I regard the corporate expressions of our community, especially the Sunday night worship/celebration and the Friday coffeehouse, as high priorities. The statistical report could not possibly reflect the importance of these ongoing gatherings. I work hard at being absent from a minimum number of them, but perhaps as much because of my need for the refreshing, renewing experiences they are for me as because of a sense of responsibility — since the quality of these experiences certainly does not depend on my presence! I have preached here 40 times this year, and some of the sermons were good, but I am glad, too, that the experience of MCC does not depend on that, either!

At the urging of the pastor of MCC Hartford, The Rev. F. Jay Deacon, four members of the City Council of Hartford have signed a RESOLUTION calling for civil rights for gay people.

It reads:

RESOLVED: that the Hartford Court of Common Council endorses all efforts to guarantee the civil rights and liberties of homosexuals and recommends that the Connecticut Legislature and the Congress of the United States pass such legislation.

The resolution resulted when the MCC Pastor wrote to each council member requesting their support.

DETROIT

After more than five years of a wonderful working Christian relationship with Trinity United Methodist Church in Highland Park, and their pastor, the Rev. Ken Woodside, MCC Detroit was forced to move when Trinity was closed down (the fate of so many inner city churches).

Now MCC Detroit has a new home and new church offices, the first since their chartering in August 1972.

The co-pastors, The Rev. Heather Anderson and Rev. Nancy Wilson, tell of their move and the new Spirit in Detroit in a letter to the people of the congregation, published in *The Way* (July 1977), their local newsletter:

"After just three weeks in our new offices and Church home, we are experiencing new energy and vitality in our life as a Church. The new offices, at 45 E. Adams in downtown Detroit, are large, out-front, and very accessible. Many people have donated money and supplies to renovate the offices, and we thank all of you. We are also excited about the potential of our relationship to Central Methodist Church, in terms of cooperation in Ministry. Our sincere thanks to Dr. Richard Devor and the people of Central Methodist Church for having the courage to work with us.

"In addition, perhaps we owe a big "thank you" to Anita Bryant. Does that sound strange? Maybe. But we believe that her efforts have spawned new energy and enthusiasm among gay people and Christians concerned about the rights and wellbeing of all people. We are thrilled about the formation of "Gay Interfaith," which began last month as a joint effort of members of Dignity, Integrity, and MCC. We are optimistic about a new spirit of growing Christian unity among Dignity, Integrity, and MCC.

"The Christian affirmation that we proclaim to you is that God has acted and is acting in history on our behalf, for the salvation/liberation of all people. And we are invited to be a part of the activity if we will but open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit and to the love of God in Jesus Christ."

HONOLULU, HI

With more than 60 counseling sessions per month, 12 worship services to plan and conduct with sermons to preach, jails and hospitals visited on a regular basis, discussion groups and Bible Study held regularly, Pastor Paul Peachy still finds time to publish *The Paper*, Hawaii's gay-oriented newspaper, which he founded, serve on the board of directors of the Sexual Identity Center, to be on call as night minister Monday through Thursday, and finally recently to found the Whitman-Stein Democratic Club "because I didn't have anything else to do."

The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson and the Rev. Heather Anderson

ATLANTA

The pastor and Board of Directors of MCC Atlanta have united the congregation with three parish districts to offer all members of the congregation an opportunity to be a member of a more intimate supportive community, became involved in the activity of the church community, keep in better communication, and take part in outreach activities to promote the growth of the church in its service to the people.

In the three or four months the parishes have existed, they have variously responded to needs and desires of the members with picnics, rap and get-acquainted sessions, social affairs, providing help for very elderly people in the neighborhoods, and helping with projects at the MCC Atlanta church home.

Christian education programs continue to be popular at MCC Atlanta. Pastor Howard Wells and Rev. Luis Leopold, both of whom hold Master of Divinity degrees are conducting a three month course on the Old Testament through July, August, and September. The course is based on *Understanding the Old Testament*, the classic text by B. W. Anderson.

In the fall, the entire mid-Atlanta district will study *Christian Sexuality*, based on the book of that title by

QUINCY, IL

It seems as if the Holy Spirit began working overtime in Illiamo when the National UFMCC Evangelistic Team started five days of special meetings (their second visit to Quincy). It was the beginning of several outstanding weeks in the history of the group.

With an all-time high attendance of 26 in the records, 24 people responded to the team on Wednesday, 22 on Thursday, 24 on Friday, 26 on Saturday, and a new record, 33 on Sunday. Although the love offering amounted to $288.10 for the five nights, the regular Sunday night offering was the second highest on record. Yet, all the numbers cannot begin to tell the story of what has happened to lives because of that week! Illiamo is thankful for Ron, Jeanne and Annette.

Just two weeks later Illiamo was visited by Adam De Baugh, Christian Social Action Director of the UFMCC in Washington DC. Adam spent Wednesday and Thursday evenings with Illiamoans instructing members on how to make their voices heard in Washington and giving an update on legislation affecting our lifestyles. Although Adam will visit all the churches in the Mid-Central District, it was a distinct pleasure to have him start his tour at Illiamo.

Perhaps blessings come in three's,

for on Sunday, May 29. District Coordinator Art Ramirez returned from St. Louis with Illiamoans to make his first official visit. Art challenged the membership with his evening message.

CHAMPAIGN, IL

Prodigal Child Parish, MCC is located in Champaign, IL. A recent lengthy feature in *The Daily Illini* "put the church on the map" publicly for the first time since its founding in February, 1976.

Larry Auten, one of the founders and present Worship Coordinator was quoted at length in the article. The church serves a twelve county area with a population of 700,000 within an hour's drive.

Larry, an Exhorter with membership in MCC Chicago, graduated from the University of Illinois with a doctors degree in law, and passed the Illinois state bar in 1971. He founded and served as acting chief administrator of John Wood Community College in Quincy, Illinois.

The church has a solid core of 10 - 12 committed workers, and an attendance from 10 to 30 persons.

TAMPA, FL

The cross was torn off the cupula, stained glass windows were shattered, pews were damaged by objects hurled through windows, walls were splattered with eggs, air conditioners were smashed and disabled, and the church name sign, deeply imbedded in cement was yanked out of the ground.

It was all featured in a three page photo article in the *Tampa Times* the week after the defeat of the gay rights ordinance in Miami.

The Rev. John Hose, an Elder of the MCC Universal Fellowship and pastor of the MCC Tampa Church blamed the vandalism on the bigotry and hatred generated by the Anita Bryant campaign.

KANSAS CITY

Sam Rape, Chairperson of Hospitality, announces that MCC Kansas City, MO is prepared to "share our church and homes with our brothers and sisters" who are going to and coming from General Conference.

DES MOINES, IA

New Pastor Alice Jones reports increased attendance at Sunday worship, $1100.00 raised at a dinner and auction, and extensive counseling as well as group discussion sessions. A Saturday night prayer time is well attended.

REV. GLYER PREACHES ON "CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY"

Rev. James Glyer, pastor of MCC Kansas City, recently preached a sermon on Christian Sexuality dealing with seven points from the new book produced by the Catholic Theological Society of America.

The book challenges many of the traditional views on sexuality and states catagorically that "the Bible does not provide a simple yes and no code of sexual ethics."

The Catholic study listed seven values which wholesome sexuality will uphold. Such sexuality is:

1) self liberating. It is expressive of one's authentic self and conducive to full self-development.
2) other enriching. It is concerned for the other.
3) honest. It has mutual trust. It is without deception.
4) Faithful. It shows consistent growth in stable relationships.
5) socially responsible. It respects the common good.
6) life-serving. It supports human dignity.
7) joyous. It proclaims the gift of life and the mystery of love and avoids any trace of mere submission to duty.

The sermon presented these seven points as an attempt to give some guidance on what is responsible Christian sexuality. "As a new community," said Rev. Glyer referring to the four year old MCC Kansas City congregation, "we must struggle to understand how God's will affects our personal sexual ethics. The heterosexual community has worked on this for centuries. But many in our community feel that the guidelines that fit the heterosexual community cannot be transferred in their entirety to the gay community. The seven values listed above are a welcome contribution to our on-going dialogue as we seek to develop patterns of responsible Christian sexuality that fit the unique needs of our community."

The book on which this sermon drew will be available at the General Conference Bookstore in Denver and from the Universal Fellowship Press in Los Angeles.

TOLEDO, OH

MCC Toledo averages about 20 at its weekly worship service, but there is a lot of activity going on in the northern Ohio congregation. Worship Coordinator, Janet Howard, a recent graduate of the University of Toledo, has appeared on several radio and television programs in recent months, as well as keeping numerous speaking engagements in person. Janet is a spokesperson for the Toledo Task Force of the Coalition for Human Rights.

CLEVELAND, OHIO

As we go to press we have learned that the home of Dan Richmond and his lover Dan Little in Cleveland has been fire bombed and burned extensively.

It all happened on July 13th, the day their pictures and story about their work in MCC Cleveland appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Dan Richmond is worship coordinator of Fellowship MCC in Cleveland.

It will be remembered that it was less than a year ago that extensive damage was done to their home, church property was pillaged, and their dog was hung from their own door post.

BALTIMORE, MD

MCC Baltimore, working with Pastor Stan Harris, held a fund-raising event to cover Rev. Perry's expenses to go to Dade County, FL to aid in the effort against Ania Bryant's forces, and they held a special prayer vigil in behalf of gay rights. Average attendance has been 55.

NEW ORLEANS, LA

Averaging 40 persons in attendance, the New Orleans congregation has moved to a larger church home and increased the pastor's salary. Pastor Ron Pannel appeared on local radio and participated in three television interviews recently.

BROOKLYN, NY

In a special service on Sunday, May 8, three exhorters and two deacons were installed at Alpha and Omega MCC. The new exhorters are Nancy Avard, Lupe Martinez and Bill Smith. The new deacons are Mercy Castenada and Jerry Cunningham.

Rev. Howard Gaass, MCC NE district coordinator, officiated with Rev. Dee in the laying of hands on the new exhorters and deacons. A special solo was sung by Eleanor Howell, and a group attended the service from the N. Y. Gay Synagogue.

Pastor Jackson started a new job as an administrative assistant in the methadone clinic of a large local hospital. She says her work includes taking minutes of meetings, preparing reports and handling supervisory duties.

Exhorter Nancy Avard has received a letter of acceptance to study at Union Theological Seminary, beginning this fall. She will receive a full tuition grant and will be working for a master of divinity degree.

NEW YORK

The part played by the pastor, deacons, and members of the New York MCC's during the disastrous Everard Baths fire which took the lives of nine people is recorded in the *New York Times* and other publications.

Pastor Gil Lincoln spent many hours at Bellevue Hospital, "where homosexuals came to make inquiries as well as to give blood," we read in the *New York Times* of May 26.

He was there to minister to the burned victims as well as to sorrowing lovers and friends. "One man recognized the charred body of his lover only by a ring he had given him," Rev. Lincoln told the *Times*. "They had been a couple for six years."

" 'We're very upset here,' said a young deacon in a sob-choked voice at the Manhattan headquarters of MCC, the nationwide homosexual-related church which has about 400 members" in three congregations in Manhattan and Brooklyn. (*New York Times*, May 26, 1977)

TOLEDO, OH

MCC Toledo averages about 20 at its weekly worship service, but there is a lot of activity going on in the

COLUMBIA, SC

MCC Columbia, now averaging 35-45 in Sunday services, hosted the South Atlantic District Conference May 27-29. Due to their growth, they have moved to a larger sanctuary.

PORTLAND, OR

One of the fastest growing congregations in the Fellowship, MCC Portland has been averaging nearly 120 in its Sunday worship service. Action has been completed to purchase a church.

NASHVILLE, TN

Recently, the gay community in the Metropolitan Nashville area has been given considerable public exposure. Long articles appeared in *"The Tennessean"* and the *"Nashville Banner."* In addition to all of these, Rev. Bigelow and other members of the MCC Nashville congregation have appeared on all three local news programs in connection with the Dade County referendum vote, and, unfortunately with the Rev. Claudius Vermilye trial in Winchester, Tennessee. Rev. Bigelow has also appeard on the "Teddy Bart's Nashville" show and also on "Morningwatch" with Jim Capps and Cherie McCormack of the MCC Nashville congregation via television, and has appeared on several radio talk shows, as well.

Compton House Community Services Center serves as a parsonage for the MCC Pastor Tom Bigelow, Church office for MCC Nashville, as well as a fellowship and counseling center. Hours are from 12:00 noon to 10:00 pm daily.

Monday is games night, fun and fellowship with Rook, Monopoly, and other games.

Tuesday is open rap night.

Wednesday is the night for AT (Alcoholics Together) for Christian fellowship and self-help for persons with drinking problems.

On Thursday night, a Charismatic prayer meeting is held along with the study of gifts and movement of the Spirit.

Friday nights deacon and exhorter meetings are alternated with Board meetings.

Saturdays are given to potluck dinners and get-togethers.

MEMPHIS, TN

A new newsletter, *Hosanna*, is announcing the calendar of events and news of the local church and district to members of MCC Memphis.

The calendar shows an active church with Sunday worship services, Wednesday charismatic prayer meetings as well as open rap groups, A.A. meetings, game nights, social affairs and outings.

KNOXVILLE, TN

Sunday, June 19th the congregation of 20 at MCC Knoxville worshipped for the first time in their new church home in the Unitarian Church on Kingston Pike. The baby of a lesbian couple was dedicated to the Lord during this first service and a letter to the editor of the local newspaper written by Worship Coordinator, F. Randall Hill was read. The following week there were five letters published in response to Randall's letter. Members of the congregation participated in the Gay Pride celebration and picnic at Tyson Park in which 125 persons took part. On Sunday July 23rd, Randall appeared on WRJZ on a talk show from 9:00 to 12:00 pm and there was a good response.

DALLAS, TX

Rev. C. Shawn Farrell, assistant pastor for the MCC Dallas congregation, working with Pastor Jim Harris in the 250-275 member worshipping community, has recently resigned as District Coordinator and committed herself to full-time service to the Dallas MCC congregation.

HOUSTON, TX

Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey and Rev. Candy Naisbitt report an attendance of 250-300 total for their two Sunday services.

Recently 50 members of the MCC Houston gathered by the banks of the Buffalo Bayou for fellowship, picnicing, kite-flying, frizbee fun, and softball. (Softball score; women 10, men 1.)

Pastor Jeri Harvey, it was recorded in *The Key*, their local newsletter, "sophisticate and scholar, had never flown a kite in her life, though being told to do so, she said, on many previous occasions."

"Everyone had too much to eat, and the shady trees overhead made many tempted to take a nap. But, the noise and excitement of the softball game (10 - 1) prevented everyone from sleeping. Even Rev. Joan Wakeford, visiting from South Africa, thought the softball game was great. (10 - 1)."

MILWAUKEE, WI

A group of eleven people now call themselves MCC Milwaukee. They have been meeting regularly for the last ten weeks. The congregation is made up of two women and nine men. They are excited about establishing an MCC church that will minister to those Milwaukeans who feel abandoned by their own churches.

The group is presently meeting in the Gay People's Union Center in Milwaukee. There is a strong possibility that a small Lutheran church will let them rent their facility on a regular basis for Sunday afternoon worship services. The group is most hopeful that the church will accept them as they understand that having a permanent place to worship will add stability to their group.

The fact that they don't have a church for regular worship has not stifled their enthusiasm. They have already unanimously voted to apply to the Board of Home Missions to become a study group.

Photo by Neil Miller

Adam DeBaugh, Social Action Director of the UFMCC Field Office in Washington, D.C., has been named by INTEGRITY, the organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends, to be their spokesperson in Washington.

introduced in the Senate. Write/call/visit your representatives: thank them if they supported us; ask why, if they did not vote. If they voted against gay rights, try to convince them that poor gay people ought to have as much access to public legal assistance as any one else. Congressman MacDonald should be singled out for special comment as the amendment appears to have been his personal idea.

Send copies of all your correspondence to the Gay Rights National Lobby at Suite 210, 110 Maryland Ave., Washington, D.C. 20002. The address of all members of Congress is:U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, D. C. 20515. Senators: U. S. Senate, Washington, D. C. 20510.

For a list of Members of congress who voted for and aginst this amendment write to the GRNL.

NEWS and NOTES

DIGNITY/NEW YORK PUBLISHES *INSIGHT*

The Dignity chapter of New York City has published four issues of a sharp and scholarly "Quarterly of Gay Catholic Opinion."

It draws from writers well-known and new. The twenty-page magazine is published in New York: Insight, POB 5110, Grand Central Station, NYC 10017. Copies will be available at the General Conference Bookstore in Denver.

HOUSE PASSES ANTI-GAY AMENDMENT

On June 27, Rep. Larry MacDonald (D-Ga.) introduced an amendment to the Legal Services Corporation Amendments Act of 1977 (HR6666) which would prohibit any use of federally funded "legal assistance with respect to any proceeding or litigation arising out of disputes or controversies on the issue of homosexuality or so-called gay rights." The amendment passed on a roll call vote of 230 to 133 with 70 not voting. It must now be voted on by the Senate and signed by the President to be enacted as law.

If this becomes law, it would mean that no poor gay person could use the federally funded legal assistance program to defend his/her civil rights. This is the first time any roll call has been taken on the gay rights issue. It gives us a picture of where we stand: who are our friends and who are in need of further contact by their constituents. This vote must not be allowed to stand without comment as it singles out gay people as one group in the country forbidden to use public monies to protect our civil rights.

Action is up to you. Write/call/visit your senators and urge them to vote against such an amendment should it be

GRNL FOR YOU?

There are now over 700 members of GRNL throughout the nation. That's quite a large number when seen as rapid growth over a short period of time but it hardly scratches the surface of the US gay population, not to mention those non-gay people who are convinced of the need for legal equality for their gay brothers

GRNL is a national organization. 38% of our members live in the Northeast. 16% come from each of three regions: the Midwest, the Southwest, and the West Coast. 10% reside in the Southeast and 4% in the Mountain States. By state, our top seven are New York, Texas, California, Metro DC (including suburban Virginia and Maryland), Florida, Illinois and Massachusetts.

The 15 women and 15 men of the Board come from 15 cities in eleven states ranging from Allston, Mass. to Los Angeles and from Minneapolis to Houston. Rev. James Sandmire and Adam DeBaugh are two of the MCC members of the board.

GRNL needs your membership to make it more effective and to better carry on the work of lobbying for a national gay civil rights bill.

Write to GRNL, Inc., Suite 210, 110 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington DC 20002.

NGTF members and officers were well-represented at the first meeting of the newly-elected board of directors of the Gay Rights National Lobby in Washington, D.C. The board was photographed on the Senate steps. (NGTF members' names are in *italics.*) First row (from left) *Dr. Bruce Voeller,* Ray Hartmann, *Alan Spear, Barbara Gittings,* James Sandmire, *Karen DeCrow,* and Bill Carey. Second row: *Paul Kuntzler, Mary Stevens, Ronni Smith, Gary Van Ooteghem, Don Embinder, Robert Silverman,* and *Jean O'Leary.* Third row: *Ginny Apuzzo, Sidney Abbott, Jack Campbell,* and Adam DeBaugh. Photo by David Dahlquist.

FATHER McNEIL TURNED DOWN AGAIN

Author and scholar, Fr. John McNeil, S.J., has once more met with rebuff from Church authorities in connection with his now famous, and already classic book, *The Church and the Homosexual*.

Both the Superior of the Jesuits in Australia and the Archbishop of Melbourne have made very clear that Fr. McNeil is a *persona non grata* in "their" territory.

A leading British religious book publisher has published an edition of *The Church and the Homosexual* in London. In connection with the promotion of that edition in Australia, Fr. McNeil accepted an invitation from *ACCEPTANCE*, the "Dignity" of Australia, to speak in several Australian cities during August.

In the meantime, the Jesuit Provincial Superior in Australia heard of the impending visit and wrote to Fr. McNeil's Jesuit Superior in the United States requesting that he be denied permission to travel to Australia.

Fr. McNeil was advised of the request, but not "forbidden" to go. He wrote to the Australian Provincial explaining his ministry and how it was in keeping with the tradition of Jesuit order and requesting him to reconsider.

Rather, the Provincial contacted the Archbishop of Melbourne who then ordered Fr. McNeil to stay out of Australia, indicating that he had "no mission" there.

Father McNeil told *In Unity* that his mission is "to reconcile the church to its gay members and its gay members to the church." "Going to Australia against the orders of the Archbishop would be counter-productive," he said.

In the meantime, *ACCEPTANCE* is campaigning in Australia in an effort to persuade the Archbishop to invite Fr. McNeil to Australia.

It will be remembered that the publicaion of Fr. McNeil's book, *The Church and the Homosexual*, was held up for more than two years while his Jesuit Superiors evaded the granting of permission to publish which was important to him so that the book would not be an "outlaw book, but eligible to be accepted into the mainstream of Catholic debate and reflection."

EVANGELICALS CONCERNED DISAVOWS CLAIM "GAY GROUP"

Dr. Ralph Blair, President of the Board of Trustees of Evangelicals Concerned, recently answered a charge from National Association of Evangelicals that EC is a "gay group" by saying, "EC is a national task force of both heterosexual and homosexual evangelicals." The NAE Executive Director stated, "We must not forget Sodom and Gomorrah as well as other ancient civilizations whose declines have been greatly attributed to moral decay and ever increasing liberality toward personal sexual aberration."

Meanwhile EC continues to grow and serve the needs of its members in more than a dozen U.S. Cities. Its newsletter Contact

Contact is published at 30 East 60th St., N. Y., N. Y. 10022.

3RD INTEGRITY CONVENTION SET FOR PHILADELPHIA

August 25 - 28th is the date for the third annual convention of Integrity, the organization of gay people who are members of the Episcopal Church.

Details can be obtained from Roger R. Stephens, 1516 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19146. (215-985-1290)

"Liberation Ethics: Responding to the Gospel" will be the theme of the conference being held on the campus of the University of Penn.

PRESBYTERIANS LAUNCH STUDY OF HOMOSEXUALITY.

The United Presbyterian Church (USA) has established a task force to study homosexuality and has requested testimonials from gay Presbyterians about experiences, past and present, as a gay person and as a Presbyterian, what it feels like being gay in the church, what pastoral response the church should make. It should be no longer than two single spaced pages and sent to Rev. Kathy Young, 475 Riverside Drive, Rm. 1020, N. Y., N. Y. 10027.

DIGNITY TO CONVENE IN CHICAGO SEPTEMBER 2 - 5

The Third International Convention of Dignity will be held in Chicago's Hotel Bismarck over the Labor Day weekend, Sept. 2 - 5. Speakers include a wide array of well-known personages: Gregory Baum, Fr. John McNeil, Barbara Gittings, Patricia Nell Warren, Fr. Paul Shanley, Morris Knight, Sister Jeannine Grammick, Adam DeBaugh, Fr. Robert Nugent, Fr. James Flick.

Further information can be obtained from Dignity International Headquarters, 755 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116.

PROTEST OVER LESBIAN ORDINATION CONTINUE

The bold and unprecedented initiative of Bishop Paul Moore of New York in ordaining Ellen Barrett, a practicing lesbian to the Episcopal priesthood earlier this year is still drawin g sharp criticism. A fellow bishop castigated him in an open letter, "Ordaining a person known to be a practicing homosexual seems to place a seal of general approval upon a style of life which I do not believe Christian theology, based on Scriptures, can unqualifiedly endorse." Bill Johnson in the United Church of Christ was the only previously ordained self-avowed homosexual in a mainline church outside of MCC, the church with a primary outreach to gay people and which has nearly 200 professional ministers, most of them gay.

GAY THROWS PIE IN FACE OF ARCHBISHOP

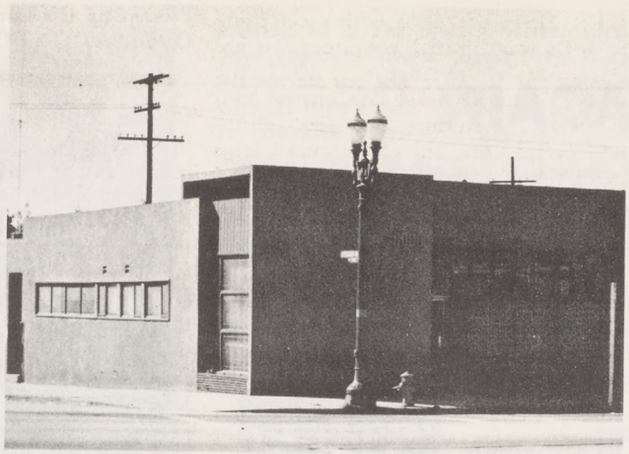
Patrick Schwartz, 22, and two companions threw a chocolate cream pie in the face of Archbishop John Roach of Minneapolis-St. Paul at a banquet on May 12, protesting the Archbishop's role in defeating gay rights legislation in Minnesota legislature. The Catholic homosexual organization, Dignity/Twin Cities (which had no connection with the incident), apologized to the Archbishop in a letter which also pointed out to the prelate: "Gay Catholics often feel abandoned by their church: it is a devastating experience."

UNITARIANS TAKE STRONG STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR GAYS

The Unitarian Universalists in their 16th Annual General Assembly called for a strong stand against the growing infringement of human rights for women, children, and gay people. The delegates re-affirmed a resolution on gay rights deploring the bigotry and misinformation of the "Save Our Children" campaign waged against gays in Dade County, FL. The action was taken by the 100 congregation denomination in Boston in July.

AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH ISSUE SINNER STATEMENT

A statement, drafted by the ALC committee for study at their convention in Los Angeles in September claims that homosexuality is a sin, but homosexuals should not be denied their civil rights. The committee which drafted the statement for the 2.4 million member church says it made no apology for restating the traditional church position.



L. A. JEWISH TEMPLE
PURCHASES ITS OWN HOME.

Beth Chayim Chadashim of Los Angeles recently announced the purchase of its own home with an investment of $35,000 for down payment and remodeling. It provides a permanent sanctuary home for the Torah, library, classrooms, and other facilities.

In the last five years the Temple had shared facilities with the Metropolitan Church of Los Angeles.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST DEPLORES ATTACKS ON GAYS

The General Synod of the 1.8 million member United Church of Christ meeting in Washington on July 5, 1977 called for an end to all discrimination based on sexual or affectional preference.

The Synod declared that recent events have kindled "fanatical prejudice" against homosexuals and violations of their civil rights "in the name of Christianity." The Church cited the repeal of the Dade County Ordinance and said this "represents a new reactionary movement which may eventually erode the civil rights of all of us."

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

A leaflet distributed by the Missouri Council of Churches declares that many religious organizations have gone on record in support of the Equal Rights Amendment. Within the context of their diverse beliefs all affirm that the dignity of personhood has been bestowed equally on all individuals, both female and male, by our Creator.

of personhood has been bestowed equally on all individuals, both female and male, by our Creator.

ERA will provide citizens of all 50 states with a constitutional guarantee of Legal Equality.

ERA will strengthen the family unit by ensuring that marriage may be a true partnership.

ERA will enhance the role of the wife by providing for the retention of legal rights after marriage.

ERA will ensure that the "Good of the Child'. be the primary criterion for awarding custody. (Alimony will continue to be awarded on the basis of need.)

ERA will guarantee fair treatment in the marketplace for the millions of women who must work.

ERA will create equal education opportunities for boys and girls in publicly supported schools.

ERA will extend to men truly beneficial "protective labor laws" and will prohibit restrictive and discriminatory hiring practices for men and women.

ERA will eliminate payment of inheritance tax by widows on jointly owned property and equalize benefits in social security and pensions.

ERA will NOT destroy the family.

ERA will NOT deny the right to privacy.

ERA will NOT dictate homosexual marriage laws.

ERA will NOT affect the Supreme Court ruling on abortion.

ERA will NOT require women to earn a salary.

ERA will NOT interfere with a state's right to legislate.

CATHOLIC THEOLOGIANS RELEASE SEXUALITY STUDY

A long-awaited report entitled *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* was released in the form of a 322-page book on June 20. Published by Paulist Press, the report prepared by a committee of American Catholic theologians headed by Father (Dr.) Anthony Kosnick of Detroit, challenges many traditional Catholic views in such areas as birth control, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, homosexuality and masturbation.

ENGLISH TEACHERS GO GAY

The National Council of Teachers of English, representing some 87,000 teachers, recently passed a resolution drafted by Dr. Louie Crew, founder of Integrity, urging the immediate end to all discrimination against lesbian and gay male persons in the profession.

PRESBYTERIANS PONDER

PHILADELPHIA, PA — The United Presbyterian Church in the USA is holding a meeting this week in which debate is expected to center on an effort to kill a study on homosexuality in the church. The issue arose at last year's General Assembly when the church's New York City body sought to ordain an avowed gay person. Delegates said then that ordination would be "injudicious if not improper" and created a study group to look into the situation. A report is not due until 1978 but opponents want to kill the study at the Philadelphia meeting.

Resolutions calling on the Presbyterian Church to oppose ordination of any homosexual minister have been offered by congregations from Pittsburgh, PA, and Huntsville, AL. Those resolutions also called on the church to eliminate the study group created to look into the issue before it makes its report.

(Reprinted from Boston's *Gay Community News*)

BAD NEWS FROM BAPTISTS

KANSAS CITY, MO — Delegates to the SouthernBaptist Convention have reaffirmed that denomination's position that homosexuality is a sin and also adopted a resolution praising singer Anita Bryant for her "courageous stand against the evils inherent in homosexuality." The 16,000 delegates represented nearly 35,000 churches and 13 million members, including Anita Bryant and President Jimmy Carter.

Evangelist Billy Graham, in addressing the convention, said that he admired Bryant for her anti-gay crusade. However Graham did add that he did not feel that God had called on him to join particular groups to oppose certain specific kinds of sin. "These are symptoms of a deeper sin," said the evanglist. "This is what God has called me to preach, that all have sinned."

(Reprinted from Boston's *Gay Community News*)

CHRISTIAN CHARITY

WASHINGTON, DC — According to a study released by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), much Christian understanding of homosexuals is built on "questionable interpretations of Scripture." The document, approved by the

1.3-million member denomination's division of Homeland Ministries, stated that the Old Testament reference to the sins of Sodom appears to mean inhospitality rather than homosexual perversion.

The study also stated that there is evidence that homosexuals "proportionately are less likely to molest children than are heterosexuals." In the view of the report, which comes up for approval by the Christian Church's General Assembly in October, "there is no evidence that toleration of homosexuals in a society will increase the number of people who subscribe to the homosexual way of life."

(Reprinted from Boston's *Gay Community News*)

EDITORIAL

Continued from page 3

but in the attack in the defense of the truth. The prophecy, "Preach the truth. Preach what you have been shown and prophesy," is a message not only for the prophet but for the people.

7) The truth calls for a realistic, open approach to sexuality. The truth calls for a rejection of the fearful, apprehensive, repressed, and unnatural attitude toward sexuality that has forced it into the sickness and darkness of its unchristian and unchurched closet.

8) Just as the question was once legitimately asked, "Can only Jews be Christians?" So now, at long last, somebody has to shout the question and work on the answer to another present day question, "Can only heterosexuals be Christians?"

9) Are we looking for numbers — to be weakened and decimated, emaciated, and betrayed by the uncommitted? Or are we looking for committed Christians who take a strong stand in the church, marching solidly behind the man God raised up — out of sin like all the rest of us — to show us how to be fully human, humanly sexual, and fully Christian, too, without the fear and trembling of the closet. And with him to take a bold stand for the truth — human rights, civil rights, women's rights, positive human sexuality, and yes, gay rights.

10) The ministry of the Word in this Fellowship, in the words of Rev. C. Shawn Farrell, a fearless ordained minister of this Fellowship, "affirms the gift of sexualtiy, straight or gay or bi-sexual . . . We endeavor to teach those we come in contact with that real freedom begins by being proud of who and what you are . . . Perversion of the truth is the greater evil . . . " And repression of the goodness and clean-ness and beauty of sexuality is a perversion of the truth.

11) Therefore it is with great pride that we bring you this issue of IN UNITY to add more truth to fight the battle against "swept out of the church and into the closet"*perversion*.

12) Therefore, it is with great pride that with our limited resources we are able to release on August 1, 1977, the first day of the General Conference, two new books, including our first cloth-bound book. One, the cloth-bound (also immediately available in paper bound edition) is *Gay Lifestyles* by Dr. Norman Pittenger. The other is *Human Rights or Homophobia*, an intelligent answer to Anita Bryant by an articulate woman from New York City, Marcia Lee Geyer.

13) Thirteen. There is no room in the Ark for the superstitious, the cowardly, the victimizers of repressed Christian sexuality. We join with our sisters and brothers in Dignity, Integrity, Lutherans Concerned, Acceptance, and all the gay caucuses struggling for their people within their chosen denominations, pointing the way out of *perversion*, as we use the power of the pen to "save our children."

REV. GILBERT . . .

Continued from page 15

among many, many others. These associations obviously do not share the fears and concerns of "Save Our Children".

Third: There is a theme that seems to run through this campaign. The theme is one of a terribly dangerous misunderstanding. It seems that many people believe that to be a homosexual is in some way to be illegal. That is not true. The Constitution of this country and this state make it very clear that the law cannot discriminate against a class of citizens. What is illegal, are specific sexual acts and the laws against these acts impact as severely on heterosexuals as they do on homosexuals. Research in the field of human sexuality shows that these specifically illegal sexual acts are practiced by over 80% of the population — heterosexual and homosexual. The question in my mind is, if all that is so, and the evidence points to it being so, why then has "Save Our Children" limited their attack to homosexuals? Do they intend to "clean house" on the rest of us next?

The issue is a simple one and terribly fundamental. Those of us who support the ordinance are not advocating special privileges for anyone. We are advocating that everyone in this country must be judged in terms of his or her individual ability. We must not allow the American Ideal of being judged on merit and one's capabilities as an individual to think, to do, and to achieve — to be destroyed by prejudice and discrimination.

I would pray that this City Council would not vote to deny a job, a home, or service in a restaurant to any American because we may not like their Religion, or their Race, or where they came from, or their Age, their Sex or their Sexual Preference.When we discard the standard of Merit as the sole criterion for judging any individual or group of Americans we open up the floodgates of Bigotry. Thank you."

Two New Fellowship Books Reviewed

JOHN J. MC NEILL, S.J., author of *The Church and the Homosexual* — on *Human Rights or Homophobia?*

The Christian community at large has, I believe, taken distance from the recently emerging gay Christian groups in order to discern their spirit and test whether or not they act in the spirit of Christ. One of the key characteristics which clearly distinguish a group with the spirit of Christ is its ability to "love your enemies and do good to those who hate you." In her book *Human Rights or Homophobia?*, Marcia Lee Geyer demonstrates in a striking way that gift of the Spirit.

By her careful investigation into the nature and dynamics of homophobia, she provides the gay community with a way to transform anger into understanding anger into understanding and understanding into a Christ-like program of loving action. At the same time, her careful documentation gives the lie to those who claim: "there is no persecution of homosexuals; it is only their paranoia which leads them to believe this."

I see it as an essential task of the Christian Gay Community to spell out a positive sexual ethic based on human personal needs and the implications of Christian faith and commitment.

Ms. Geyer makes an excellent point with her emphasis on the new urgency concerning gay visibility, since the mobilization of homophobic passion behind the leadership of Anita Bryant.

However, because the primary attack against the gay community is based on the widely held myth of homosexual child molestation, I

think it is highly imprudent at this point in time to challenge legal standards concerning age of consent without adequately considering all the consequences.

LOUIE CREW, Ph.D., author, and founder of INTEGRITY, on *Gay Lifestyles.*

Norman Pittenger's *Gay Lifestyles: A Christian Interpretation of Homosexuality and the Homosexual* is a dispeller of darkness, a harbinger of light. It speaks sense where the church has too often spoken nonsense, or worse still, has not spoken at all. It is a candid book, even with the bedroom geometry of gay bodies housing God's spirit. It is an affirming book, not so much of a theological or philosophical "position" as of persons, namely, of the gay children of God. It is a sensitive book, informed by the experience of gay pain, yes, but by the experience of gay love and forgiveness, too.

Gay Lifestyles was written after this eminent Anglican theologian had attended and delivered major addresses in the summer of 1975 to the General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and to the Convention of INTEGRITY in his own Episcopal Church.

Dr. Pittenger had written earlier works that addressed homosexuality honestly and affirmatively, most notably, *A Time For Consent* and *Making Sexuality Human.* Yet, **Gay Lifestyles** goes far beyond these important earlier efforts; it is informed much more clearly by extensive experience with gay Christians. Furthermore, **Gay Lifestyles** has a decidedly American focus that the earlier books did not have in their British context.

Dr. Pittenger is known internationally as a Process Theologian, one who sees God as a Process. Here God is clearly in the Process of loving gay human beings and in the process of teaching gay human beings and all human beings to love and affirm one another.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We both are very much pleased with the *IN UNITY*. We find it to be one of the most important publications in our home, keep up the good work, and we hope to be visiting California soon, and would like very much to come by and see some of our friends who work on the magazine.

It's very much of value in expressing to our friends, and reaches out to all of the community, to let them know more about salvation, and that we have a fellowship of which is strengthened through the Love of the people, and the faith of the Lord Jesus, CHRIST.

We want to thank you, and the staff, for making the *UNITY* publication, one which people can appreciate, as much as Don and I do.

Remember both of us in your loving prayers, and the gay community, here in Indianapolis.

Donald E. Mott & William D. Johns
Indianapolis, IN

THANK YOU

In Unity expresses deep appreciation to members of MCC of the Palms at Tice, FL and to Good Shepherd Parish, MCC in Chicago, for sending back issues of *IN UNITY* to replace the files lost in the Union Street fire that destroyed the mother church and Fellowship headquarters in 1973.

Additional copies of early *IN UNITY*'s are still needed to complete the archives. If you know of any copies that could be sent for this purpose, it would be greatly appreciated if you would contact: Director of Publications, Universal Fellowship Press/POB 5570, Los Angeles, CA 90055.

CHRISTIANITY AND CRISIS DEALS WITH HOMOSEXUALITY

Christianity and Crisis — the widely respected Christian journal of opinion — has published a special double issue on homosexuality. The May 30-June 13, 1977 issue clearly takes a stand which favors "the full Christian acceptance of homosexuality and its responsible genital expression." The editors recognized that their journal is vulnerable to the same ignorant, fearful backlash that caused two other religious publications to cease publishing — *Motive* and *Trends*. Nevertheless, they state in the opening editorial, "When decisions are necessary, we have to presume that God's will can be discerned, if we have eyes to see, in the evidence at hand. In our reading of the evidence there is no longer a tenable case for excluding homosexuals from *full* participation in the life of the church and of society. We also believe that it is time, or past time, for people who have arrived at this conviction to give it voice."

Among the contributors to this special issue are U.C.C. theologians James B. Nelson and Peggy Way, and UCC Gay Caucus coordinator, Nancy Krody. We are pleased to note their articles, along with others in this special issue, prompted this stance from the editors of *C. & C.*: "We do not find these statements merely interesting or challenging, merely worthy of a hearing. We find them persuasive."

We commend the editors of *C. & C.* and encourage all wo support the struggle of gay people to be free to counter the expected backlash by sending supportive letters to them and by renewing or subscribing to *C. &. C.* A special 35th anniversary offer to new subscribers offers nine months (18 issues) for only $3. The annual rate is $10 (students, $8). The address is 537 W. 121st St., New York, 10027. The special issue is $1 for single copy. This issue is available from Universal Fellowship Press.

BOARD of INSTITUTIONAL MINISTRY REPORT

Rev. Bob Arthur, the National Director of the Board of Institutional Ministry (USA) has announced the filing of a lawsuit against the Attorney General of the United States and the Federal Bureau of Prisons in the U. S. District Court in the Northern California District on July 14, 1977. The suit is demanding that the Federal Bureau of Prisons cease banning the literature and representatives from Metropolitan Community Church from serving those prisoners in federal prisons who request them. At the same time a request for a temporary restraining order was considered, but not pressed when the U. S. District Attorney agreed to transfer a prisoner as we had requested. Back in March of this year, prisoner Calvin Keach had requested and had approved a transfer from where he is presently incarcerated in El Reno, Oklahoma, to a federal prison closer to his mother who is sick, in Seagoville, Texas. He would also be able to continue his education through a program at that institution. His transfer was approved at that time. However, shortly thereafter, after the meeting at the White House of the representatives of the gay community, some of the officials there at El Reno approached Calvin and demanded that he rescind his requests for literature from gay organizations, including MCC, or they would see to it that his approved transfer would never be carried out. As of the date of the filing of our suit, Calvin was still in El Reno, since he refused to acquiesce to their demand. Since our request to the U. S. District Attorney, we were guaranteed that Calvin would be transferred within two days. The date has now been set for September 19 for the court appearance on the suit that we have filed demanding entrance to federal prisons.

We also understand that the hearing date for our similar suit against the State of Michigan was heard on July 19 in Detroit. We are all anxiously awaiting word on the final outcome of that hearing. We all covet your prayers as we face the system with our demands for justice and respect as God's instrument of ministry to our brothers and sisters behind bars.

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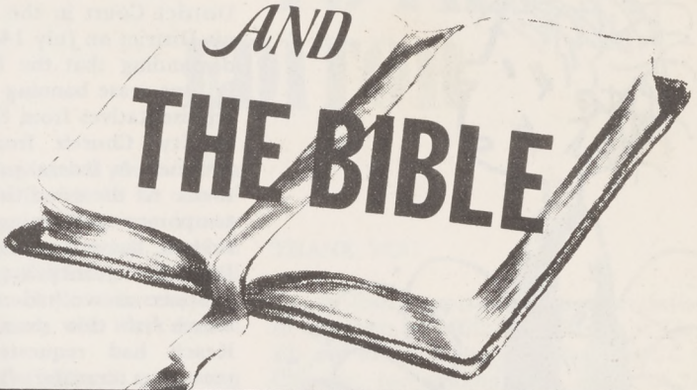

IN UNITY

News Magazine of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

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By The Rev. L. Robert Arthur

by the Reverend Doctor Norman Pittenger

The Universal Fellowship Today

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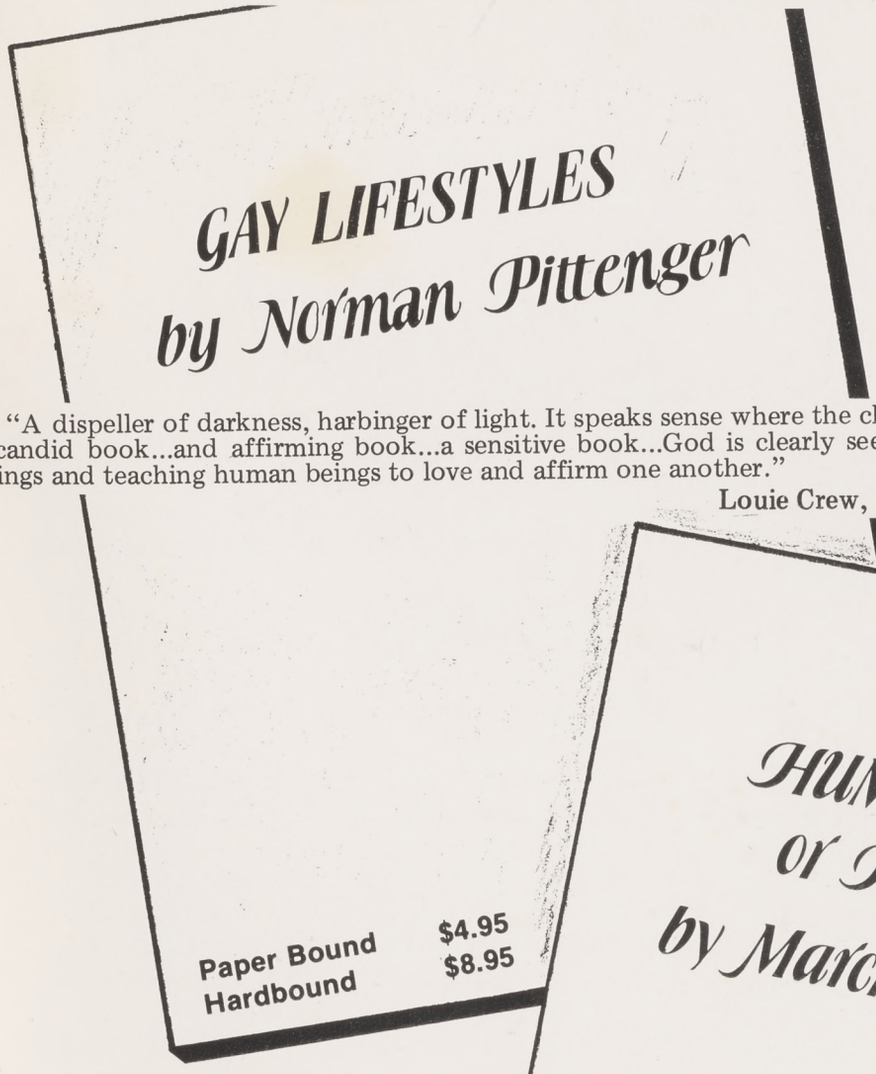

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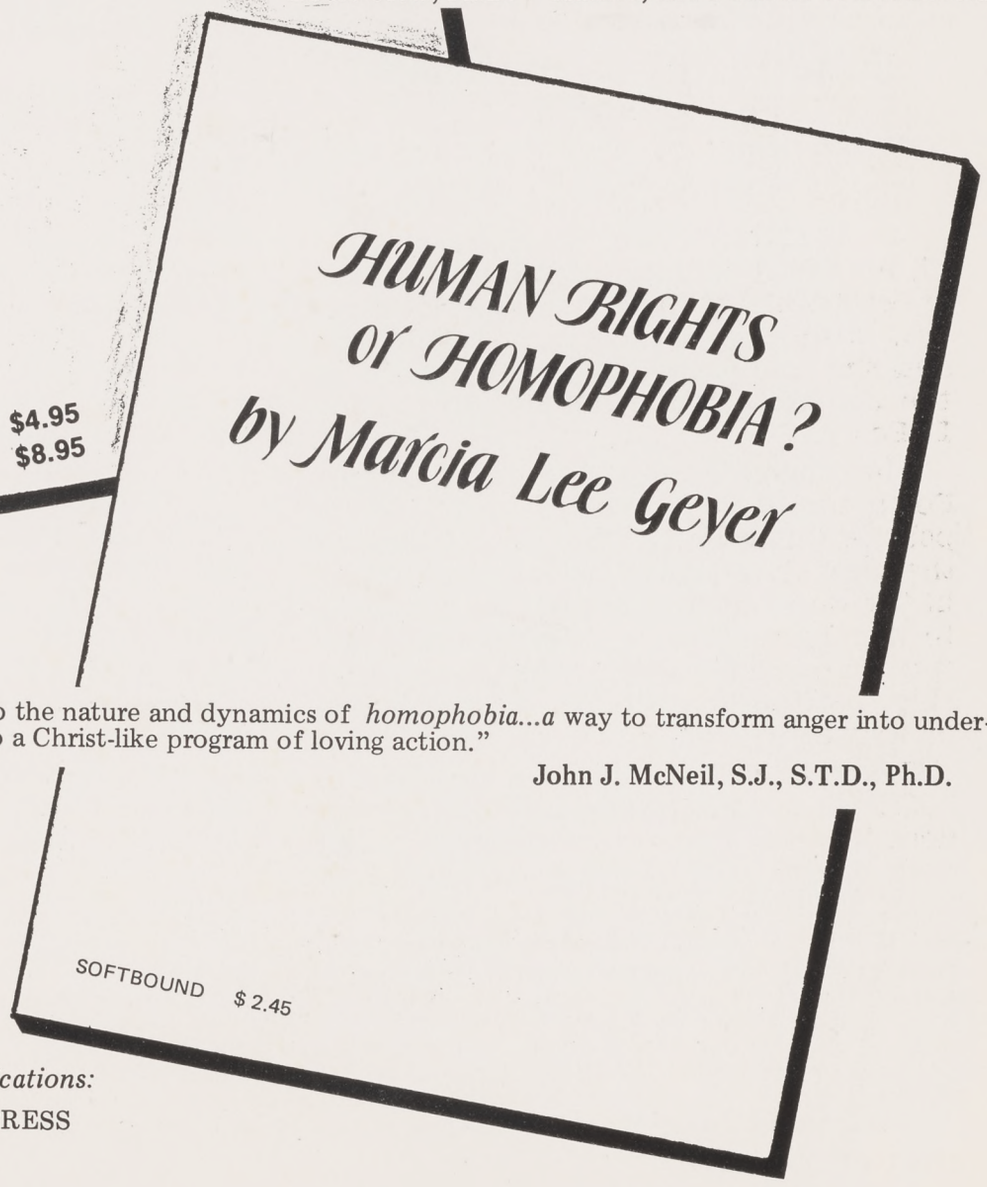
Louie Crew, Ph.D. -- Author, and Founder of INTEGRITY



"A careful investigation into the nature and dynamics of *homophobia...a* way to transform anger into understanding and understanding into a Christ-like program of loving action."

John J. McNeil, S.J., S.T.D., Ph.D.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 95th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 123 WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1977 No. 99

House of Representatives

TRIBUTE TO REV. TROY D. PERRY

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 9, 1977

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, on June 26, the Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles will mark "Gay Pride Sunday" with a special service of celebration and the conferring of special honors on the denomination's founder, Rev. Troy D. Perry.

The denomination founded by Troy Perry, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, is one of the most unusual religious organizations in the world. It is dedicated to extending to members of the gay community the spiritual guidance and religious fellowship so often unavailable to them in the mainstream "straight" churches.

Reverend Perry, himself a gay, had to build his church in the face of tremendous hostility from other clergymen and deep doubts within the gay community itself as to whether such an unusual institution could succeed. Reverend Perry's first church was founded in Los Angeles with just a dozen courageous "charter members." I am proud that the church was founded and prospered in Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles church not only attracted gay Christians, it also attracted large numbers of straight people who admired the tremendous sincerity and dedication of Rev. Troy Perry. Reverend Perry's Christian church inspired the founding of a gay Reform Temple in Los Angeles. This temple, which Reverend Perry and his congregation assisted in every way they could, was the first of its kind to gain recognition and membership in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Few people have done more than Rev. Troy Perry to give to gays a sense of self-worth and an ability to fufill joyfully and without guilt or social rejection their most profound religious needs.

Reverend Perry's tiny band has grown into a mighty denomination of churches all over the world with a membership of over 17,000. In helping liberate individuals of his own sexual orientation, Rev. Troy Perry contributed to the liberation of all of us. I share Reverend Perry's belief that the humanity of any and each of us is diminished when the full humanity of any of us is denied.